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The WITCH

BY MARY JOHNSTON

IN MEMORIAM
Mary J. L. Mc Donald

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IN MEMORIAM
Mary J. L. Mc Donald

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CANCELLED

(p. 154)

"GOOD-BYE, MISTRESS FRIENDLY-SOUL!"

THE WITCH

BY

MARY JOHNSTON

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
N. C. WYETH

NEW YORK
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THE WITCH

CHAPTER I

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER

It was said that the Queen was dying. She lay at Richmond, in the palace looking out upon the wintry, wooded, March-shaken park, but London, a few miles away, had daily news of how she did. There was much talk about her — the old Queen — much telling of stories and harking back. She had had a long reign — "Not far from fifty years, my masters!" — and in it many important things had happened. The crowd in the streets, the barge and wherry folk upon the wind-ruffled river, the roisterers in the taverns drinking ale or sack, merchants and citizens in general talking of the times in the intervals of business, old soldiers and seamen ashore, all manner of folk, indeed, agreed upon the one most important thing. The most important thing had been the scattering of the Armada fifteen years before. That disposed of, opinions differed as to the next most important. The old soldiers were for all fighting wherever it had occurred. The seamen and returned adventurers threw for the voyages of Drake and Frobisher and Gilbert and Raleigh. With these were inclined to agree the great merchants

and guild-masters who were venturing in the East India and other joint-stock companies. The little merchant and guild fellows agreed with the great. A very large number of all classes claimed for the overthrow of Popery the first place. On the other hand, a considerable number either a little hurriedly slurred this, or else somewhat too anxiously and earnestly supported the assertion. One circle, all churchmen, lauded the Act of Uniformity, and the pains and penalties provided alike for Popish recusant and non-conforming Protestant. Another circle, men of a serious cast of countenance and of a growing simplicity in dress, left the Act of Uniformity in obscurity, and after the deliverance from the Pope, made the important happening the support given the Protestant principle in France and the Netherlands. A few extreme loyalists put in a claim for the number of conspiracies unearthed and trampled into nothingness — Scottish conspiracies, Irish conspiracies, Spanish conspiracies, Westmoreland and Northumberland conspiracies, Throgmorton conspiracies — the death of the Queen of Scots, the death, two years ago, of Essex.

All agreed that the Queen had had a stirring reign — all but the latter end of it. The last few years — despite Irish affairs — had been dull and settled, a kind of ditch-water stagnation, a kind of going downhill. Fifty years, almost, was a long time for one person to reign. . . .

On a time the Queen had been an idol and a cyno-

sure — for years the love of a people had been warm about her. It had been a people struggling to become a nation, beset with foreign foes and inner dissensions, battling for a part in new worlds and realms. She had led the people well, ruled well, come out with them into the Promised Land. And now there was a very human dissatisfaction with the Promised Land, for the streams did not run milk and honey nor were the sands golden. As humanly, the dissatisfaction involved the old Queen. She could not have been, after all, the Queen that they had thought her. . . . After crying for so many years "Long live Queen Elizabeth!" there would come creeping into mind a desire for novelty. *King James, — King James!* The words sounded well, and promised, perhaps, the true Golden Age. But they were said, of course, under breath. The Queen was not dead yet.

They told strange stories of her — the old Queen; usually in small, select companies where there were none but safe men. As March roared on, there was more and more of this story-telling, straws that showed the way the tide was setting. They were rarely now stories of her youth, of her courage and fire, of her learning, of the danger in which she lived when she was only "Madam Elizabeth," of her imprisonment in the Tower — nor were they stories of her coronation, and of the way, through so many long years, she had queened it, of her "mere Englishness," her steady courage, her power of work, her

councillors, her wars, and her statecraft. Leaving that plane, they were not so often either stories of tragic errors, of wrath and jealousy, finesse and deception, of arbitrary power, of the fret and weakness of the strong. — But to-day they told stories of her amours, real or pretended. They repeated what she had said to Leicester and Leicester had said to her, what she had said to Alençon and Alençon had answered. They dug up again with a greasy mind her girlhood relations with Seymour, they created lovers for her and puffed every coquetry into a full-blown *liaison;* here they made her this man's mistress and that man's mistress, and there they said that she could be no man's mistress. They had stories to tell of her even now, old and sick as she was. They told how, this winter, for all she was so ill at ease, she would be dressed each day in stiff and gorgeous raiment, would lie upon her pillows so, with rings upon her fingers and her face painted, and when a young man entered the room, how she gathered strength. . . .

The March wind roared down the streets and shook the tavern signs.

In the palace at Richmond, there was a great room, and in the room there was a great bed. The room had rich hangings, repeated about the bed. The windows looked upon the wintry park, and under a huge, marble mantelpiece, carved with tritons and wreaths of flowers, a fire burned. About the room were standing women — maids of honour,

tiring-women. Near the fire stood a group of men, silent, in attendance.

The Queen did not lie upon the bed — now she said that she could not endure it, and now she said that it was her will to lie upon the floor. They placed rich cushions and she lay among them at their feet, her gaunt frame stretched upon cloth of gold and coloured silk. She had upon her a long, rich gown, as full and rigid a thing as it was possible to wear and yet recline. Her head was dressed with a tire of false hair, a mass of red-gold; there was false colour upon her cheek and lip. She kept a cup of gold beside her filled with wine and water which at long intervals she put to her lips. Now she lay for hours very still, with contracted brows, and now she turned from side to side, seeking ease and finding none. Now there came a moan, and now a Tudor oath. For the most part she lay still, only the fingers of one hand moving upon the rim of the cup or measuring the cloth of gold beneath her. Her sight was failing. She had not eaten, would not eat. She lay still, supported upon fringed cushions, and the fire burned with a low sound, and the March wind shook the windows.

From the group of men by the fire stepped softly, not her customary physician, but another of some note, called into association during these last days. He crossed the floor with a velvet step and stood beside the Queen. His body bent itself into a curve of deference, but his eyes searched without rever-

ence. She could not see him, he knew, with any clearness. He was followed from the group by a grave and able councillor. The two stood without speaking, looking down. The Queen lay with closed eyes. Her fingers continued to stroke the cloth of gold; from her thin, drawn lips, coloured cherry-red, came a halting murmur: "*England — Scotland — Ireland —*"

The two men glanced at each other, then the Queen's councillor, stepping back to the fire, spoke to a young man standing a little apart from the main group. This man, too, crossed the floor with a noiseless step and stood beside the physician. His eyes likewise searched with a grave, professional interest.

"*Navarre,*" went the low murmur at their feet. "*Navarre and Orange. . . . No Pope, but I will have ritual still. . . . England — Scotland —*"

The Queen moaned and moved her body upon the cushions. She opened her eyes. "Who's standing there? God's death —!"

The physician knelt. "Madam, it is your poor physician. Will not Your Grace take the draught now?"

"No. — There's some one else —"

"Your Grace, it is a young physician — English — but who has studied at Paris under the best scholar of Ambroise Paré. He is learned and skilful. He came commended by the Duke of —— to Sir Robert Cecil —"

"God's wounds!" cried the Queen in a thin, im-

perious voice. "Have I not told you and Cecil, too, that there was no medicine and no doctor who could do me good! Paré died, did he not? and you and your fellow will die! All die. I have seen a many men and matters die — and I will die, too, if it be my will!"

She stared past him at the strange physician. "If he were Hippocrates himself I would not have him! I do not like his looks. He is a dreamer and born to be hanged. — Begone, both of you, and leave me at peace."

Her eyes closed. She turned upon the cushions. Her fingers began again to move upon the rich stuff beneath her. "*England* —"

The rejected aid or attempt to aid stepped, velvet-footed, backward from the pallet. The physicians knew, and all in the room knew, that the Queen could not now really envisage a new face. She might with equal knowledge have said of the man from Paris, "He is a prince in disguise and born to be crowned." But though they knew this to be true, the Queen had said the one thing and had not said the other, and what she said had still great and authoritative weight of suggestion. The younger physician, returning to his place a little apart alike from the women attendants and from the group of courtiers, became the recipient of glances of predetermined curiosity and misliking. Now, as it happened, he really did have something the look of a dreamer — thin, pale, and thoughtful-faced, with

musing, questioning eyes. While according to accepted canons it was not handsome, while, indeed, it was somewhat strange, mobile, and elf-like, his countenance was in reality not at all unpleasing. It showed kindliness no less than power to think. But it was a face that was not usual. . . . He was fairly young, tall and well-formed though exceedingly spare, well dressed after the quiet and sober fashion of his calling. Of their own accord, passing him hastily in corridor or street, the people in the room might not have given him a thought. But now they saw that undoubtedly he *was* strange, perhaps even sinister of aspect. Each wished to be as perspicacious as the Queen.

But they did not think much about it, and as the newcomer, after a reverence directed toward the Queen, presently withdrew with the older physician, — who came gliding back without him, — and as he was seen no more in the palace, they soon ceased to think about him at all. He had been recommended by a great French lord to the favour of Sir Robert Cecil. The latter, sending for him within a day or two, told him bluntly that he did not seem fitted for the Court nor for Court promotion.

The March wind roared through London and over Merry England and around Richmond park and hill. It shook the palace windows. Within, in the great room with the great bed, the old Queen lay upon the floor with pillows beneath her, with her brows drawn together above her hawk nose. At intervals her mor-

tal disease and lack of all comfort wrung a moan, or she gave one of her old, impatient, round, mouth-filling oaths. For the most part she lay quite silent, uneating, unsleeping, her fleshless fingers keeping time against the rich cloth beneath her. Her women did not love her as the women of Mary Stuart had loved that Queen. Year in and year out, day in and day out, they had feared this Queen; now she was almost past fearing. They took no care to tell her that the carmine upon her face was not right, or that she had pushed the attire of hair to one side, and that her own hair showed beneath and was grey. They reasoned, perhaps with truth, that she might strike the one who told. She lay in her rich garments upon the floor, and the fire burned with a low sound beneath the wreathed tritons and she smoothed the gold cloth with her fingers. "*England —Scotland—Ireland. . . . Mere English — . . . The Pope down, but I'll have the Bishops still —*"

CHAPTER II

THE CAP AND BELLS

THE inn was small and snug, near Cheapside Cross, and resorted to by men of an argumentative mind. The Mermaid Tavern, no great distance away, had its poets and players, but the Cap and Bells was for statesmen in their own thought alone, and for disputants upon such trifles as the condition of Europe, the Pope, and the change in the world wrought by Doctor Martin Luther. It was ill-luck, certainly, that brought Gilbert Aderhold to such a place.

When he lost hope of any help from Cecil, the evident first thing to do upon returning from Richmond to London, was to change to lodgings that were less dear,—indeed, to lodgings as little dear as possible. His purse was running very low. He changed, with promptitude, to a poor room in a poor house. It was cold at night and dreary, and his eyes, tired with reading through much of the day, ached in the one candlelight. He went out into the dark and windy street, saw the glow from the windows and open door of the Cap and Bells, and trimmed his course for the swinging sign, a draught of malmsey and jovial human faces.

In the tavern's common room he found a seat upon the long bench that ran around the wall. It

was a desirable corner seat and it became his only by virtue of its former occupant, a portly goldsmith, being taken with a sudden dizziness, rising and leaving the place. Aderhold, chancing to be standing within three feet, slipped into the corner. He was near the fire and it warmed him gratefully. A drawer passing, he ordered the malmsey, and when it was brought he rested the cup upon the table before him. It was a long table, and toward the farther end sat half a dozen men, drinking and talking. What with firelight and candles the room was bright enough. It was warm, and at the moment of Aderhold's entrance, peaceable. He thought of a round of wild and noisy taverns that he had tried one after the other, and, looking around him, experienced a glow of self-congratulation. He wanted peace, he wanted quiet; he had no love for the sudden brawls, for the candles knocked out, and lives of peaceable men in danger that characterized the most of such resorts. He sipped his wine, and after a few minutes of looking about and finding that the cluster at the far end of the table was upon a discussion of matters which did not interest him, he drew from his breast the book he had been reading and fell to it again. As he read always with a concentrated attention, he was presently oblivious of all around.

An arm in a puffed sleeve of blue cloth slashed with red, coming flat against the book and smothering the page from sight, broke the spell and brought

morrow was to-morrow, and to-night was to-night. He told the truth. "I am a poor physician, my masters, who hath of late been set about with misfortune —"

The red and blue bully smote the table with his fist.

"What a murrain is a man doing in the Cap and Bells who cannot pay for sack? Poor physician, quotha! I've known a many physicians, but none so poor as that —"

One of the lawyers, a middle-aged, wiry man in black, raised his head. "He says true. Come, brother, out with thy gold and silver!"

"When I shall have paid," said Aderhold, "for the malmsey I have drunk, I shall not have fourpence in my purse."

"Pay for the sack," said the lawyer, "and leave the malmsey go."

"Nay," said Aderhold, "I owe for the malmsey."

The red and blue man burst forth again. "Oons! Would you have it that you do not owe the sack? Call for the drink and a great bowl of it, aye! If the host is out at the end, he can take his pay with a cudgel or summon the watch! Physician, quotha? Now, as my name's Anthony Mull, he looks more to me like a black seminary priest!"

Aderhold leaned back appalled. He wished himself in the windy street or the gloom of his lodgings, or anywhere but here. Was it all to begin again, the great weariness of trouble here and trouble there?

To thread and dodge and bend aside, only in the end to find himself at bay, bright-eyed and fierce at last like any hunted animal — he who wanted only peace and quiet, calm space to think in! He groaned inwardly. "Ah, the most unlucky star!" There came to his help, somewhat strangely, and, though none noticed it, upon the start as it were of the red and blue bully's closing words, the Inns of Court man who had spoken before. He took his arms from the table and, turning, called aloud, "William Host! William Host!"

The host came — a stout man with a moon face. "Aye, sir? aye, Master Carnock?"

"William Host," said Carnock, "it is known, even in that remnant of Bœotia, the Mermaid Tavern, that thou 'rt the greatest lover of books of all the Queen's subjects —"

The host assumed the look of the foolish-wise. "Nay, nay, I would not say the greatest, Master Carnock! But 't is known that I value a book —"

"Then," said the other, "here is a learned doctor with a no less learned book." Rising, he leaned halfway over the table and lifted from before Aderhold the volume with which he had been engaged. "Lo! A good-sized book and well made and clothed! Look you, now! Is't worth thy greatest bowl of sack, hot and sugared? It is — I see it by thine eye of judicious appraisement! I applaud thy judgement! — I call it a Solomon's judgement. — Furnish the doctor with the sack and take the book for payment!"

leech, so named, and put the question to him, will he curse Popery and all its works."

It seemed, in truth, that this was Aderhold's unlucky night. That, or there was something in the Queen's declaration, there was something about him different, something that provoked in all these people antagonism. And yet he was a quiet man, of a behaviour so careful that it suggested a shyness or timidity beyond the ordinary. He was not ill-looking or villainous-looking — but yet, there it was! For all that he was indubitably of English birth, "*Foreigner*" was written upon him.

The present unluckiness was the being again involved in this contentious and noisy hour. He had been gathering himself together, meaning to rise with the emptying of the bowl, make his bow to the company, and quit the Cap and Bells. And now it seemed that he must stop to assure them that he was not of the old religion! Aderhold's inner man might have faintly smiled. He felt the lawyer's gaze upon him — a curious, even an apprehensive, gaze. The justice put the question portentously, all the table, save only the lawyer, leaning forward, gloating for the answer, ready to dart a claw forward at the least flinching. But Aderhold spoke soberly, with a quiet brow. "I do not hold with cursing, Master Justice. It is idle to curse past, present, or to come, for in all three a man but curses himself. But I am far removed from that faith, and that belief is become a strange and hostile one to me. I am no Papist."

The bully struck the table with his fist. "As my name's Anthony Mull, that's not enough!"

And the justice echoed him with an owl-like look: "That's not enough!"

A colour came into Aderhold's cheek. "There is, my masters, no faith that has not in some manner served the world and given voice to what we were and are, good and bad. No faith without lives of beauty and grace. No faith without its garland. But since I am to clear myself of belonging to the old religion — then I will say that I abhor — as in a portion of myself, diseased, which I would have as far otherwise as I might — that I abhor in that faith all its cruelties past and present, its Inquisition, its torturers and savage hate, its wars and blood-letting and insensate strife, its falseness and cupidity and great and unreasonable pride, its King Know-No-More and its Queen Enquire-No-Further! I abhor its leasing bulls, its anathemas and excommunications, its iron portcullis dropped across the outward and onward road, its hand upon the throat of knowledge and its searing irons against the eyes of vision! I say that it has made a dogma of the childhood of the mind and that, or soon or late, there will stand within its portals intellectual death — "

The table blinked. "At least," said the justice sagely, "you are no Papist!"

But the red and blue man would not be balked of his prey. "That's round enough, but little enough as a true Churchman talks! You appear to

me not one whit less one of us than you did before! Master Pierce, Master Pierce! if he be not a masked Jesuit, then is he a Marprelate man, a Banbury man, a snuffling, Puritan, holy brother! Examine him, Master Pierce! My name is not Mull, if he be not somehow pillory fruit —"

It seemed that they all hated a Puritan as much as a Papist. "Declare! Declare! Are you a Banbury Saint and a Brother? Are you Reformed, a Precisian, and a Presbyter? Are you John Calvin and John Knox?"

But Aderhold kept a quiet forehead. "A brother to any in the sense you mean — no. A saint — not I! A Calvinist? — No, I am no Calvinist."

"Not enough! Not enough!"

Aderhold looked at them, bright-eyed. "Then I will say that Calvin burned Servetus. I will say that where they have had power to persecute they have persecuted! I will say that —"

Outside the Cap and Bells arose a great uproar. Whether it were apprentices fighting, or an issue of gentry and sword-play with — in either case — the watch arriving, or whether it were a fire, or news, perhaps, of the old Queen's death — whatever it was it behooved the Cap and Bells to know the worst! All the revellers and disputers rose, made for the door, became dispersed. Aderhold snatched up his cloak and hat, laid a coin beside the empty malmsey cup, sent one regretful glance in the direction of the volume lying beside the great bowl, and

quitted the Cap and Bells. In the street was a glare of light and the noise of running feet. The crowd appeared to be rushing toward Thames bank, some tall building upon it being afire. He let them go, and drawing his cloak about him, turned in the direction of his lodging.

He had not gone far when he felt himself touched on the shoulder. "Not so fast! A word with you, friend! — You've put me out of breath —"

It proved to be the lawyer who had befriended him. They were standing before some church. Wall and porch, it rose above them, dark and vacant. The lawyer looked about him, glanced along the steps and into the hollow of the porch. "Bare as is this land of grace! — Look you, friend, we know that it is allowable at times to do that in danger which we disavow in safety. Especially if we have great things in trust. — I marked you quickly enough for a man with a secret — and a secret more of the soul and mind than of worldly goods. Hark you! I'm as little as you one of the mass-denying crew we've left. What! a man may go in troublous times with the current and keep a still tongue — nay, protest with his tongue that he loves the current — else he'll have a still tongue, indeed, and neither lands nor business, nor perhaps bare life! But when we recognize a friend — " He spoke rapidly, in a voice hardly above a whisper, a sentence or two further.

"You take me," said Aderhold, "to be Catholic.

You mistake; I am not. I spoke without mask." Then, as the other drew back with an angry breath. "You were quick and kindly and saved me from that which it would have been disagreeable to experience. Will you let me say but another word?"

"Say on," said the other thickly, "but had I known —"

The light from Thames bank reddening the street even here, they drew a little farther into the shadow of the porch. "I have travelled much," said Aderhold, "and seen many men and beliefs, and most often the beliefs were strange to me, and I saw not how any could hold them. Yet were the people much what they were themselves, some kindly, some unkindly, some hateful, some filled with all helpfulness. I have seen men of rare qualities, tender and honourable women and young children, believe what to me were monstrous things. Everywhere I have seen that men and women may be better than the dogma that is taught them, seeing that what they think they believe is wrapped in all the rest of their being which believes no such thing. Both in the old religion and in the Reformed have I known many a heroic and love-worthy soul. Think as well as you may of me, brother, and I will think well of thee — and thank thee, besides, —"

"Cease your heretic talk!" said the lawyer. "I held you to be of holy Mother Church —" With suddenness, in the darkness, he put forth his foot and swung his arm, at once tripping and striking the

physician with such violence that he came to the ground with his forehead against the stone step of the church. When he staggered to his feet the lawyer was gone. Around him howled the March wind and far above the church vane creaked. He stood for a moment until the giddiness passed, then gathered his cloak about him and, hurrying on through the nipping air, reached his lodging without further adventure.

That night he slept well. The next morning, as he was eating his breakfast, that was spare enough, he heard a loud and formal crying in the street below. He went to the window. A crier was approaching, at his heels a mob of boys and of the idle generally. *"The Queen is Dead! — The Queen is Dead! — The Queen is Dead! — Long Live King James!"*

CHAPTER III

THE TWO PHYSICIANS

He went that morning to visit the alderman, inopportune as he knew the visit would be esteemed. But many things were inopportune — hunger, for instance. The alderman found the visit offensively, unpatriotically inopportune. "What! The King's Majesty's ascension day —!" But one thing saved Aderhold, and that was the presence in the alderman's parlour of some seven or eight cronies, men and women. It would not do — it would not do for the alderman to seem haggling and unwilling. Aderhold quitted the house the richer by twelve shillings.

The narrow streets were crowded; everybody was out, excited and important as though he or she had died or been crowned. The physician strolled with the others. The morning was fine, he felt wealthy and happy. The sunshine that stroked the projecting, timbered fronts of houses was the sunshine of home, the soft and moist light of England. He loved England. He wandered for an hour or two here and there in the London of less than two hundred thousand souls. He went down to the riverside, and sat upon a stone step, and gazed into the purple, brooding distance. . . . At last he turned back, and

after a time found himself in the street of his lodging, and before the house.

It was a narrow, poor, and gloomy place, owned by people whom he guessed to have fallen on evil days. The plainly dressed elderly woman from whom he had hired his room had told him, indeed, as much. "Aye?" said Aderhold. "Then, mother, I'll feel the more at home." He had lodged here now ten days and he had seen only the elderly woman and her son, a boy far gone in consumption who coughed and coughed. The woman was a silent, rigid person, withered but erect, wearing a cap and over her gown of dark stuff a coarse white kerchief and apron. This morning, when she brought him his half loaf and tankard of ale, he had spoken with casualness of the Cap and Bells. She looked at him strangely. "The Cap and Bells! . . . Doubtless you heard good talk there." Then had come the crying about the Queen's death. When he turned from the window the woman was gone.

Now he entered the house. As he laid his hand upon the stair-rail the woman stood framed in a doorway. "Tarry a little," she said. "I wish to tell you that this house will lodge you no longer."

Aderhold stood still, then turned. "And why, good mother? I like my room and the house. I have striven to be in no way troublesome." He put his hand in his purse and drew it forth with the alderman's shillings upon the palm. "You see I have money. You'll not lose by me."

A voice came from the room behind the woman. "Let him enter, mother. We would see this fellow who will make no trouble for us."

Aderhold noted a pale triumph in the woman's strong, lined face and in her tense, updrawn figure. "Aye, it happened to give thanks for!" she told him. "Two things happened this morning. A King came to the throne who, for all his mother's scarlet and raging sins, has himself been bred by godly men to godly ways! And my two sons came home from overseas!"

She turned and passed through the doorway into the room from which she had come. Aderhold, after a moment of hesitation, followed. It was a large, dark place, very cold and bare. Here, too, was a table, drawn toward the middle of the room, with a cloth upon it and bread and a piece of meat. Beside it, chair and stool pushed back, stood two men — the returned sons Aderhold was at once aware. He had seen before men like these men — English sectaries abroad, men who stood with the Huguenots in France, and in the Low Countries fought Spain and the Devil with the soldiers of Orange. Estranged or banished from home, lonely and insular, fighting upon what they esteemed the Lord's side, in the place where they esteemed the fight to be hottest, they exhibited small, small love and comradeship for those in whose cause they fought. Only, truly, in conventicles, could they seem to warm to people of another tongue and history. Ultra-zealous, more

Calvin than Calvin, trained to harshness in a frightful war, iron, fanatic, back now they came to England, the most admirable soldiers and the most uncharitable men!

The two stood in their plain doublets, their great boots, their small falling collars. They were tall and hard of aspect, the one bearded, the other with a pale, clean-shaven, narrow, enthusiast's face. The home-keeping son also had risen from table. He stood beside his mother, coughing and pressing a cloth to his lips.

The bearded man spoke. "Good-morrow, friend!"

"Good-morrow, friend," answered Aderhold.

"You spoke that," said the bearded man, "as though you were indeed a friend, whereas we know you to be but a Cap and Bells friend."

"I do not take your meaning," said Aderhold. "I would be friends — no man knows how I would be friends with men."

The shaven man spoke. "Thou hypocritical prelate's man! Why did you let slip to my mother that the Cap and Bells was your place of revelling and roistering and blackening God to his face? As if, before we went to the wars, the Cap and Bells was not known for what it was — yea, and is! for my mother saith the leopard hath not changed his spots nor the Ethiop his skin — a bishop-loving, stained-glass praising, Prayer-Book upholding, sacrament kneeling, bowing, chanting, genuflecting, very pillar and nest of prelacy! drinking-place of all they who,

if they had their wicked will, would give into the hand of ruin — yea, would pillory and stock, yea, would put to the rack if they might, yea, would give to the flame if they were strong enough! — the Lord's chosen people, sole fence between this land and the fate of the cities of the plain!"

"There have been before now," said the bearded man, "spies sent among the Lord's people, and always such have been received and comforted in that same house — to wit, the Cap and Bells!"

The consumptive took the red cloth from his lips. "Mother, mother, did I not say, when the man came, that he had a strange look?"

"Aye, Andrew," said the mother, "he went like a man with a guilty load and watched his shadow. — But I had you to think on, and the need for bread, and he paid me, which, God knoweth! they do not always do. And it came not into my head, until, before he thought, he had said the 'Cap and Bells,' that he might be here to spy and wring news of us — cozening us to tell reportable tales of the Lord's Saints!" She stopped, then spoke on with a high, restrained passion and triumph. "But now — but now I think that that is what he is! But now I am not afraid — and now he may get his deserts — seeing that the new King is surely for us, and that my sons have come home!"

"The new King!" exclaimed the shaven man. "The new King is an old Stuart! Lean upon that reed and it will pierce your hand! I tell that to my

brother and to you, mother, and you will not believe —"

"Time will show," said the bearded man impatiently. "Time will show which of us is right. But to-day my mother can turn out this bishop's man, neck and crop! Yea, and if he murmurs —"

He made a step forward, a big-boned, powerful man, grim of countenance. His hand shot out toward the physician.

Aderhold gave back a step, then recovered himself. "You are mistaken," he said. "I am no spy and I am no bishop's man. Like you, I have been from England. I return poor and seeking physician's work. Desiring lodging, I asked at this house as I had asked at others, and as honestly as a man may. For the Cap and Bells, I knew naught of it nor of its frequenters. I crossed its threshold but once, and so ill did the place suit me that I am not like to go again. I tell you the plain truth."

The woman and her sons regarded him fixedly. "What think you," asked the shaven man at last, abruptly and sternly, "of the law that maketh it an offense for a man to worship his Creator after the dictates of his own heart — yea, that would compel him to conform to practices which his soul abhorreth?"

"I think," said Aderhold, "that it is an evil law."

"You say truth," answered the shaven man. "Now tell me plainly. Believe you in copes and

stoles and altars and credence tables, in kneeling at communion, in Prayer-Book and surplice and bowing when the name is mentioned, in bishops and archbishops and pride of place before God?"

Aderhold looked at him dreamily. The fear of physical injury, which was the weakness that most beset him, was gone by. He had at times a strange sense of expansion, accompanied by a differentiation and deepening of light. The experience — he knew it to be inward, and never steadfast, very fleeting — returned to him now. The room looked world-wide, the four interlocutors tribes and peoples. "My mind does not dwell overmuch," he said, "upon matters such as these. They are little matters. The wrong is that a man should be made to say they are necessary and great matters, and, to avoid falseness, be made to fight dwarfs as though they were giants. — I need no priest in cope or surplice or especial dress when all that I am lifts in contemplation and resolve. I need not kneel when All communes with All. No slave is my soul. Would I pray, I can pray without book, and would I not, no book held before my face hath power to pray for me. If I bowed my head at each thought of the mystery that surrounds us, I would not with over-much frequency walk erect, for I think much and constantly of that mystery. If I bow my head without thought — an idiot may do the same. As for prelates and they who are called 'spiritual princes' — I have seen not one who is not a man-chosen master of a man-built house."

The woman spoke uncertainly. "If we have been mistaken in you, sir, —"

"What you say has truth," said the bearded man. "But it also has a strangeness and rings not like our truth. . . . If you are a Brownist, this house will have naught to do with you!"

"I am not a Brownist," said Aderhold wearily. The sense of space widening off and intenser light was gone. Never yet had it stayed but the fewest of moments, and, going, it threw life back upon itself. . . .

But the second son, who had been standing with an abstracted and distant look, started and spoke. "Let him alone, mother and my brother! Whatever he be, he hath no ill-will nor guile —" He turned to the table. "Are you hungry?" he asked. "Sit down and eat with us."

Aderhold dwelt in this house some days longer. He did not again see the two sons; they had taken horse and ridden to visit some returned comrade or officer in the country. The woman he saw, and sometimes talked with, but she had ceased to be curious about him, and they chiefly spoke of the consumptive boy. He was near death. The physician could only give something that should make the nights pass more swiftly, less painfully.

He himself wished to see a physician, the physician to whom, as to Cecil, he had been recommended by a great noble of France, but whom he had not seen since that day in Richmond, after that hour in the

Queen's chamber. He had gone to his house to enquire — he was yet out of London, he would be home on such a day. Aderhold went then, but could not see him; waited two days, and was again denied; went in another three, and was admitted. The physician was alone, in a small room, and his manner dry and cold.

If Aderhold still nursed a hope it was a faint and failing one. Before that day in Richmond the hope had been strong. This physician was a skilled man and knew skill when he saw it — the great Frenchman had written with a guarded enthusiasm, but yet with enthusiasm of what Gilbert Aderhold might do — the London physician had let drop a hint that he himself had thought at times of an assistant—if not that, he could certainly speak a word in season in another quarter. Aderhold had hoped—after Richmond he had hoped less strongly. Now he found that hope was failing. What had happened? What always happened?

The physician continued standing. The room opened upon a garden, and outside the lattice window there showed a tender mist of budding tree and shrub. "You were so good," said Aderhold, "as to bid me come to you upon your return."

"I wished," said the physician, "to give all weight and recognition to the commendation of the Duke of ——." A grey cat came and rubbed against his ankle. He stooped and lifting the creature to the table beside him stood stroking it. "The commen-

dation of great noblemen is at times like their largesse. It often falls—through, of course, no fault of theirs—before the stranger and the unworthy."

"If I be unworthy," said Aderhold, "yet I am not strange to that nobleman, nor, I think, unloved by him. He has been my good patron, almost, I might dare to say, my friend."

"Aye?" said the physician. "It has come to Court ears, with other French news, that the Duke is out of favour. . . . Moreover, a friend of my own has lately returned from Paris where he had long resided. He is a man of the world, with a great interest in life and a knowledge of what is talked about, small things as well as great. He told me"—the physician paused—"of *you!*"

"Yes," Aderhold said dully; "of me?"

"He brought you in as a slight case, but typical, of what grows up in the narrow strip between religious wars and factions, between Leaguer and Huguenot—to wit, something that is neither Catholic nor Protestant, which the Leaguer would burn and the Huguenot would flay! He told me of your case and your trial and imprisonment, and how none would help you, neither Papist nor Reformed, but only this one nobleman whose child, it seems, you had healed, and even he could only help by helping you forth from France." The physician continued to draw his hand over the grey fur. "I quarrel with that nobleman for considering that an atheist might prosper here in England, and for deceivingly writing to me

only of his skill in all that pertained to his art! I might," said the physician, "have become involved in what discovery and disfavour you may bring upon yourself in this realm!"

"I am not," said Aderhold, "an atheist. Sanction and authority and restraint are within."

The other shrugged. "Oh, your fine distinctions!" He went to the window and set it wider so that the whole green garden and white and rosy branches of bloom seemed to come into the room. "I am not," he said, with his back to the lattice, "myself a theologian. By nature I am a 'live and let live' man. Peter, Luther, Calvin, Mohammed, and Abraham each may have had his own knowledge of heaven and hell! I will not quarrel with knowledge for being various. I am tolerant — I am tolerant, Master Aderhold! But I hold with emphasis that you must not inculpate others — no, you must not let the edge of your mantle of heresy touch another! It were base ingratitude, for instance, were you —"

"I have been careful," said Aderhold, "to mention your name to no one. I have led since seeing you a retired and soundless life. I am a stranger in this city and none knows my life, nor feels an interest in it."

The physician's countenance showed relief. "I did not know of what folly you might not have been capable!" He stroked the cat, moved a few paces about the room and returned. "I regret that I can give you no aid. Indeed, I must tell you plainly that

I owe it to my family and my patients and my place — which is no slight one — in the esteem of this city, to refuse all association with a man who at any hour may fall under suspicion and prosecution." He paused. "I may say to you once, and this once only, that I find your case a hard one. I certainly advise you not to be stiff-necked, but living in the world to conform to the world. Philosophize, if you choose, but inwardly, inwardly, man!"

He spoke quite amiably, even genially. It was apparent that Aderhold had taken his dismissal, that he was not going to beg or be distressful. He considered through the open casement the height of the sun. He could give the unfortunate man a minute or two longer. "Let us speak a moment," he said, "of our art. London is thronged with doctors. I tell you truly that there is scant room for another, even were the circumstances not as they are, and you were as like others as you are unlike. However still a tongue you may keep, — and I think you may betray yourself oftener than you think, — you will eventually be found out." He lifted his finger impressively. "Now the temper of the time is religious and growing ever more so. The Italian and antique spirit that I remember is going — is almost gone. We are all theologians and damn the whole world outside of our particular ark. People of the old faith, people of the established faith, people of the Presbytery — each of the three detests and will persecute the remaining two. Right and left suffer

from the middle, which is in power, as the middle — and the remaining other — would suffer were the right or left in power. War, secret or open, war, war! and they only unite to plague a witch or to run to earth and burn for heresy one like you who belongs not to right nor left nor middle. The tolerant, humane, philosophic heart dissents — but few, my friend, are tolerant and humane, too few, too few! All this being so, I do not advise you to remain in London — no, I should not, were you Galen himself!"

Aderhold stood gazing at the garden without. There were thorn hedges everywhere — across all paths. "I do not know," he said, "where I should go —"

"My advice," said his fellow physician, "would be to travel to some smaller town that hath never received a whisper from France. And now" — he rose — "and now I must bid you good-bye, for an important personage expects me at this hour."

CHAPTER IV

THE ROSE TAVERN

THREE days after this conversation Gilbert Aderhold said good-bye to the Puritan woman and her son, shouldered a stick with a bundle at the end, and set his face toward the periphery of London and the green country beyond. He had no money. The idea of asking his fellow physician for a loan haunted him through one night, but when morning came the ghost was laid. He strongly doubted if the other would make the loan and he did not wish to ask it anyhow. Since he had been in London he had given a cast of his art more than once or twice in this neighbourhood. But it was a poor neighbourhood, and those whom he had served had been piteous folk, and he did not think that they could pay. He had not asked them to pay. He had no connections in London, no friends. His knowledge of men told him that, for all his tolerance and humanity, the fellow physician might be expected to drop a word of warning, here and there, among the brotherhood. His hope had been that his case was so obscure that no talk would come from Paris. . . . It was not only that the arm of religion had been raised; he had invoked in medicine, too, strange gods of observation and experience; he had been hounded forth

with a double cry. To linger in London, to try to work and earn here — with a shudder he tasted beforehand the rebuff that might come. He would leave London.

He was without near kindred. His parents were dead, a sister also. There was an elder brother, a sea-captain. Aderhold had not seen him for years, and fancied him now somewhere upon the ocean or adventuring in the New World. He remembered his mother telling him that there were or had been cousins to the north. She had spoken of an elderly man, living somewhere in a Grange. The name was Hardwick, not Aderhold. . . . He had no defined idea or intention of seeking kinsmen, but eventually he turned his face toward the north.

It was six in the morning when he stepped forth. Slung beside his bundle of clothing and a book or two, wrapped in a clean cloth, was a great loaf of bread which the Puritan woman had given him. There was a divine, bright sweetness and freshness in the air and the pale-blue heaven over all. He turned into Fleet Street and walked westward. The apprentices were opening the shops, country wares were coming into town, the city was beginning to bustle. Aderhold walked, looking to right and left, interested in all. He was not a very young man, but he was young. Health and strength had been rudely shaken by anxiety, fear, and misery. Anxiety still hovered, and now and then a swift, upstarting fear cut him like a whip and left him quiver-

ing. But fear and anxiety were going further, weakening, toning down. Calm was returning, calm and rainbow lights.

Hereabouts in the street were all manner of small shops, places of entertainment, devices by which to catch money. The apprentices were beginning their monotonous crying, "What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack?"

He came to a booth where there was a raree show. A shock-headed, ragged youth was taking down the boards, which were painted with figures of Indians, copper-hued and feathered. Half a dozen children stood watching.

Aderhold stopped and watched also. "Have you an Indian here," he asked the boy. "I have never seen one."

The youth nodded. "He sleeps in the corner back of the curtain. You pay twopence to see him — " He grinned, and looked at the children. "But it's before hours, and if so be you won't tell master on me — "

"We won't, master, we won't!" chorused the children.

The boy took down the last board, showing a concave much like a den with a black curtain at the back. He whistled and the curtain stirred. "We got him," said the boy, "from two Spaniards who got him from a ship from Florida. They trained him. They had a bear, too, that we bought, but the bear died." He whistled again. The curtain parted and

the Indian came forth and sat upon a stool planted in the middle of the den.

It was evident that he had been "trained." Almost naked, gaunt, dull and hopeless, he sat with a lack-lustre eye. The boy whistled again and he spoke, a guttural and lifeless string of words. The children gathered close, flushed and excited. But Aderhold's brows drew upward and together and he turned a little sick. He was a physician; he was used to seeing wretchedness, but it had not deadened him. Every now and then the wave of human misery came and went over him, high as space, ineffably dreary, unutterably hopeless. . . . He stood and looked at the Indian for a few moments, then, facing from the booth, walked away with a rapid and disturbed step which gradually became slower and halted. He turned and went back. "Has he eaten this morning? You don't give him much to eat?"

"Times are hard," said the boy.

Aderhold took the smaller bundle from his stick, unwrapped it and with his knife cut from the loaf a third of its mass. "May I give him this?"

The boy stared. "If you choose, master."

The physician entered the booth, went up to the Indian and placed the bread upon his knee. "Woe are we," he said, "that can give no efficient help!"

The savage and the European looked each other in the eyes. For a moment something hawk-like, eagle-like, came back and glanced through the pupils of the red man, then it sank and fled. His eyes grew

dull again, though he made a guttural sound and his hand closed upon the bread. The physician stood a moment longer. He had strongly the sacred wonder and curiosity, the mother of knowledge, and he had truly been interested to behold an Indian. Now he beheld one — but the iron showed more than the soul. "I am sorry for thee, my brother," Aderhold said softly.

The boy spoke from without. "Hist, hist! Master's coming down the street."

Aderhold left the booth, shouldered his stick and bundle and went on his way.

He walked steadily, the sun at his back, lifting through the mist and at last gilding the whole city. He was now upon its northwestern fringe, in the "suburbs." They had an evil name, and he was willing to pass through them hurriedly. They had a sinister look, — net-work of foul lanes, low, wooden, squinting houses, base taverns that leered.

A woman came and walked beside him, paint on her cheeks.

"Where are you going, my bonny man?" Then, as he would have outstepped her, "What haste? Lord! what haste?"

"I have a long way to go," said Aderhold.

"As long and as short as I have to go," said the woman. "If you are willing we might go together."

Aderhold walked on, "I am not for that gear, mistress."

"No?" said the woman. "Then for what gear are

you? . . . Perhaps I am not for it, either, but — Lord God! one must eat!" She began to sing in a cracked voice but vaguely sweet.

"A lass there dwelled in London town—
'Alas!' she said, 'Alas!' she said,
'Of gold and land
I've none in hand —'"

They were coming flush with the opening of a small, dim courtyard. She broke off her song. "Bring your stick and bundle in front of you! This is a marked place for snatchers."

Her warning was not idle. As he shifted the stick a shaggy, bull-headed man made a move from shadow to sunlight, lurched against him and grasped at the bundle. Aderhold slipping aside, the fellow lost his balance and came almost to the ground. The woman laughed. Enraged, the bull-headed man drew a knife and made at the physician, but the woman, coming swiftly under his raised arm, turned, and grasping wrist and hand, gave so sudden a wrench that the knife clanked down upon the stones. She kicked it aside into the gutter, her face turned to Aderhold. "Be off, my bonny man!" she advised. "No, he'll not hurt me! We're old friends."

Aderhold left the suburbs behind, left London behind. He was on an old road, leading north. For the most part, during the next few days, he kept to this road, though sometimes he took roughly paralleling, less-frequented ways, and sometimes footpaths

through fields and woods. Now he walked briskly, enjoying the air, hopeful with the hopeful day. Sometime in the morning an empty cart overtook him, the carter walking by his horse. They walked together up a hill and talked of the earth and the planting and the carting of stuffs and the rates paid and the ways of horses. Level ground reached, the carter offered a lift, and the two travelled some miles together, chiefly in a friendly silence. At midday Aderhold unwrapped his loaf of bread, and the carter produced bread, too, and a bit of cheese and a jug containing ale. They ate and drank, jogging along by April hedges and budding trees. A little later the carter must turn aside to some farm, and, wishing each other well, they parted.

This day and the next Aderhold walked, by green country and Tudor village and town, by smithy and mill, by country houses set deep in giant trees, by hamlet and tavern, along stretches of lonely road and through whispering, yet unvanished forests. The sun shone, the birds sang, the air was a ripple of zephyrs. The road had its traffic, ran an unwinding ribbon of spectacle. There were the walls of country and the roof of sky and a staccato presence of brute and human life. Now horsemen went by — knightly travel or merchant travel, or a judge or lawyer, or a high ecclesiastic. Serving-men walked or rode, farming folk, a nondescript of trade or leisure. Drovers came by with cattle, country wains, dogs. A pedlar with his pack kept him company for a

while. Country women passed, carrying butter and eggs to market, children coming from school, three young girls, lithe, with linked arms, a parson and his clerk, an old seaman, a beggar, a charcoal-burner, a curious small troupe of mummers and mountebanks, and for contrast three or four mounted men somewhat of the stripe of the widow's sons. One looked a country gentleman and another a minister of the stricter sort. They gazed austerely at the mummers as they passed. Now life flowed in quantity upon the road, now the stream dwindled, now for long distances there was but the life of the dust, tree and plant, and the air.

When the second sunset came he was between hedged fields in a quiet, solitary country of tall trees, with swallows circling overhead in a sky all golden like the halos around saints' heads in pictures that he remembered in Italy. No house was visible, nor, had one been so, had he made up his mind to ask the night's lodging. The day had been warm, even the light airs had sunk away, the twilight was balm and stillness. He possessed a good cloak, wide and warm. With the fading of the gold from the sky he turned aside from the road upon which, up and down as far as he could see, nothing now moved, broke through the hedge, found an angle and spread his cloak within its two walls of shelter. The cloak was wide enough to lie upon and cover with, his bundle made a pillow. The stars came out; in some neighbouring, marshy place the frogs began their choiring.

Although he was tired enough, he could not sleep at once, nor even after a moderate time of lying there, in his ears the monotonous, not unmusical sound. He thought of what he should do to-morrow, and he could not tell. Walk on? Yes. How far, and where should he stop? So far he had not begged, but that could not last. The colour came into his cheek. He did not wish to beg. And were there no pride in the matter, there was the law of the land. Beggars and vagabonds and masterless men, how hardly were they dealt with! They were dealt with savagely, and few asked what was the reason or where was the fault. *Work.* Yes, he would work, but how and where? Dimly he had thought all along of stopping at last in some town or village, of some merciful opportunity floating to him, of tarrying, staying there — finding room somewhere — his skill shown — some accident, perhaps, some case like the alderman's wife . . . a foothold, a place to grip with the hand, then little by little to build up. Quiet work, good work, people to trust him, assurance, a cranny of peace at last . . . and all the time the light growing. But where was the cranny, and how would he find the way to it?

Over him shone the Sickle. He lay and wondered, and at last he slept, with the Serpent rising in the east.

Late in the night, waking for a moment, he saw that the sky was overcast. The air, too, was colder. He wrapped the cloak more closely about him and slept again. When he woke the day was here, but

not such a day as yesterday. The clouds hung grey and threatening, the wind blew chill. There set in a day of weariness and crosses. It passed somehow. Footsore, at dusk, he knocked at a cotter's door, closed fast against the wind which was high. When the family questioned him, he told them that he was a poor physician, come from overseas, going toward kinspeople. There chanced to be a sick child in the cottage; they let him stay for reading her fever and telling them what to do.

The next day and the next and the next the sky was greyer yet, and the wind still blew. It carried with it flakes of snow. The road stretched bare, none fared abroad who could stay indoors. Aderhold now stumbled as he walked. There was a humming in his ears. In the early afternoon of his sixth day from London he came to as lonely a strip of country as he had seen, lonely and grey and furrowed and planted with a gnarled wood. The flakes were coming down thickly.

Then, suddenly, beyond a turn of the road, he saw a small inn, set in a courtyard among trees. As he came nearer he could tell the sign—a red rose on a black ground. It was a low-built house with a thatched roof, and firelight glowed through the window. The physician had a bleeding foot; he was cold, cold, and dizzy with fatigue. He had no money, and the inn did not look charitable. In the last town he had passed through he had bought food and the night's lodging with a portion of the con-

tents of his bundle. Now he sat down upon the root of a tree overhanging the road, opened his shrunken store, and considered that with most of what was left he might perhaps purchase lodging and fare until the sky cleared and his strength came back. A while before he had passed one on the road who told him that some miles ahead was a fairly large town. He might press on to that . . . but he was tired, horribly tired, and shivering with the cold. In the end, keeping the bundle in his hand, he went and knocked at the door of the Rose Tavern.

The blowsed servant wench who answered finally brought her master the host, a smooth, glib man with a watery eye. He looked at the stuff Aderhold offered in payment and looked at the balance of the bundle. In the end, he gestured Aderhold into the house. It was warm within and fairly clean with a brightness of scrubbed pannikins, and in the kitchen, opening from the chief room, a vision of flitches of bacon and strings of onions hanging from the rafters. Besides the serving-maid and a serving-man there was the hostess, a giant of a woman with a red kerchief about her head. She gave Aderhold food. When it was eaten he stretched himself upon the settle by the kitchen hearth, arms beneath his head. The firelight danced on the walls, there was warmth and rest. . . .

Aderhold lay and slept. Hours passed. Then, as the day drew toward evening, he half roused, but lay still upon the settle, in the brown warmth. There

was a feeling about him of peace and deep forests, of lapping waves, of stars that rose and travelled to their meridians and sank, of long, slow movements of the mind. The minutes passed. He started full awake with the hearing of horses trampling into the courtyard and a babel of voices. He sat up, and the serving-wench coming at the moment into the kitchen he asked her a question. She proved a garrulous soul who told all she knew. The Rose Tavern stood some miles from a good-sized town. Those in the yard and entering the house were several well-to-do merchants and others with their serving-men. They had been to London, travelling together for company, and were now returning to this town. There was with them Master — she could n't think of his name — of Sack Hall in the next county. And coming in at the same time, and from London, too, there was old Master Hardwick who lived the other side of Hawthorn village, in a ruined old house, and was a miser. If *he* had been to London it would be sure to have been about money. And finally there was Squire Carthew's brother, also from Hawthorn way. He was a fine young man, but very strict and religious. The company was n't going to stay — it wished food and hot drink and to go on, wanting to reach the town before night. And here the hostess descended upon the girl and rated her fiercely for an idle, loose-tongue gabbling wench —

Aderhold, rested, rose from the settle and went into the greater room. Here were the seven or eight

principal travellers — the serving-men being without, busy with the riding and sumpter horses. All in the room were cold, demanding warmth and drink, — peremptory, authoritative, well-to-do burghers of a town too large for village manners and not large enough for a wide urbanity. In a corner, on a bed made of a bench and stool, with a furred mantle for cover, lay a lean old man with a grey beard. He was breathing thick and hard, and now and again he gave a deep groan. A young serving-man stood beside him, but with a dull and helpless aspect toward sickness. Across the room, standing by a window, appeared a man of a type unlike the others in the room. Tall and well-made, he had a handsome face, but with a strange expression as of warring elements. There showed a suppressed passionateness, and there showed a growing austerity. His dress was good, but dark and plain. He was booted and cloaked, and his hat which he kept upon his head was plain and wide-brimmed. Aderhold, glancing toward him, saw, he thought, one of the lesser gentry, with strong Puritan leanings. This would be "Squire Carthew's brother."

As he looked, the serving-man left the greybeard stretched upon the bench, went across to the window, and, cap in hand, spoke a few words. The man addressed listened, then strode over to the chimney-corner and stood towering above the sick man. "Are you so ill, Master Hardwick? Bear up, until you can reach the town and a leech!"

Aderhold, who had not left the doorway, moved farther into the room. Full in the middle of it, a man who had had his back to him swung around. He encountered one whom he had encountered before — to wit, the red and blue bully of the Cap and Bells. Master Anthony Mull did not at first recognize him. He was blustering against the host of the Rose because there was no pasty in the house. The physician would fain have slipped past, but the other suddenly gave a start and put out a pouncing hand. "Ha, I know you! You're the black sorcerer and devil's friend at the Cap and Bells who turned a book into a bowl of sack!"

He had a great hectoring voice. The travellers in the room, all except the group in the corner, turned their heads and stared. Aderhold, attempting to pass, made a gesture of denial and repulsion. "Ha! Look at him!" cried Master Anthony Mull. "He makes astrologer's signs — warlock's signs! Look if he does n't bring a fiend's own storm upon us ere we get to town!"

Very quiet, kindly, not easily angered, Aderhold could feel white wrath rise within him. He felt it now — felt a hatred of the red and blue man. The most of those in the room were listening. It came to him with bitterness that this bully and liar with his handful of idle words might be making it difficult for him to tarry, to fall into place if any place invited, in the town ahead. He had had some such idea. They said it was a fair town, with some learning. . . .

He clenched his hands and pressed his lips together. To answer in words was alike futile and dangerous; instead, with a shake of the head, he pushed by the red and blue man. The other might have followed and continued the baiting, but some further and unexpected dilatoriness exhibited by the Rose Tavern fanned his temper into conflagration. He joined the more peppery of the merchants in a general denouncement and prophecy of midnight ere they reached the town. Aderhold, as far from him as he could get, put under the surge of anger and alarm. He stood debating within himself the propriety of leaving the inn at once, before Master Mull could make further mischief. The cold twilight and the empty road without were to be preferred to accusations, in this age, of any difference in plane.

The sick man near him gave a deep groan, struggled to a sitting posture, then fell to one side in a fit or swoon, his head striking against the wall. The young serving-man uttered an exclamation of distress and helplessness. The man with the plain hat, who had turned away, wheeled and came back with knitted brows. There was some commotion in the room among those who had noticed the matter, but yet no great amount. The old man seemed unknown to some and to others known unfavourably.

Aderhold crossed to the bench and bending over the sufferer proceeded to loosen his ruff and shirt. "Give him air," he said, and then to the tall man, "I am a physician."

They laid Master Hardwick upon a bed in an inner room, where, Aderhold doing for him what he might, he presently revived. He stared about him. "Where am I? Am I at the Oak Grange? I thought I was on the road from London. Where is Will, my man?"

"He is without," said Aderhold. "Do you want him? I am a physician."

Master Hardwick lay and stared at him. "No, no! You are a leech? Stay with me. . . . Am I going to die?"

"No. But you do not well to travel too far abroad nor to place yourself where you will meet great fatigues."

The other groaned. "It was this one only time. I had monies at stake and none to straighten matters out but myself." He lay for a time with closed eyes, then opened them again upon Aderhold. "I must get on — I must get home — I must get at least as far as the town to-night. Don't you think that I can travel?"

"Yes, if you go carefully," said Aderhold. "I will tell your man what to do —"

The old man groaned. "He works well at what he knows, but he knows so little. . . . I do not know if I will get home alive."

"How far beyond the town have you to go?"

"Eight miles and more. . . . Doctor, are you not travelling, too? You've done me good — and if I were taken again —" He groaned. "I'm a poor

man, — they make a great mistake when they say I'm rich, — but if you'll ride with me I'll pay somehow — "

Aderhold sat in silence, revolving the matter in his mind. "I have," he said at last, "no horse."

But Master Hardwick had with him a sumpter horse. "Will can now ride that and now walk. You may have Will's horse." He saw the long miles, cold and dark, before him and grew eager. "I'm a sick man and I must get home." He raised himself upon the bed. "You go with me — you've got a kindly look — you do not seem strange to me. What is your name?"

"My name is Gilbert Aderhold."

"Aderhold!" said Master Hardwick. "My mother's mother was an Aderhold."

CHAPTER V

THE ROAD TO HAWTHORN

It was full dusk when the London travellers did at last win away from the Rose Tavern. The evening was cold, the snow yet falling in slow, infrequent flakes. The merchants and their men, together with Master Anthony Mull, first took the road. Then followed Master Harry Carthew, straight and stern, upon a great roan mare. In the rear came on slowly old John Hardwick, his servant Will, and the physician Gilbert Aderhold. These three soon lost sight of the others, who, pushing on, came to the town, rest, and bed, ere they had made half the distance.

At last, very late, the place loomed before them. They passed through dark and winding streets, and found an inn which Master Hardwick knew. Together Will and Aderhold lifted the old man from his horse and helped him into the house and into a great bed, where he lay groaning through the night, the physician beside him speaking now and again a soothing and steadying word.

He could not travel the next day or the next. Finally Aderhold and Will wrung permission to hire a litter and two mules. On the third morning they placed Master Hardwick in the litter and all took the street leading to the road which should bring them

in the afternoon to the Oak Grange. Going, they passed a second inn, and here Master Harry Carthew suddenly appeared beside them upon his great roan. It seemed that affairs had kept him likewise in this town, but that now he was bound in their direction.

The snow had passed into rain. The weather had moderated, the rain ceased, and this morning there was pure blue sky and divine sunlight. The latter bathed the unpaved streets, the timbered, projecting fronts of houses, guildhall and shops and marketplace, and the tower and body of a great and ancient abbey church. Beyond the church the ground sloped steeply to the river winding by beneath an arched bridge of stone. Above the town, commanding all, rose a castle, half-ruinous, half in repair. The streets were filled with people, cheerful in the morning air. Litter, mules, and horsemen moved slowly along. Honest Will drew a long breath. "Fegs! Who would live in the country that could live in a town?"

Aderhold was riding beside him, Carthew being ahead on his great roan mare. "Tell me something," said the physician, "of the country to which we are going."

"The country's a good country enough," said Will. "But the Oak Grange — Lord! the Grange is doleful and lonely —"

"Doleful and lonely?"

"It's all buried in black trees," said Will, "and nobody lives there but our old master."

"Where does Master Carthew live?"

"He lives in the squire's house beyond the village. He's the squire's brother."

"You're near a village?"

"Aye, the village of Hawthorn."

They rode on, Will gazing busily about him. They were still in the town, indeed in an important part of it, for before them rose the prison. Without it stood pillory and stocks, two men by the legs in the latter, a dozen children deliberately pelting them with rotten vegetables, shards, and mud. Aderhold stared with a frown, the countryman with a curious mixture of interest in the event and lumpish indifference as to the nature of it. "Aye," he repeated, "the village of Hawthorn."

"Is there," asked Aderhold, "a physician in the village?"

They had passed the prison, and were approaching the sculptured portal of the great church. "A physician?" said Will. "No. There was one, but he died two years ago. Now they send here, or the schoolmaster will bleed at a pinch or give a drench. And sometimes they go — but the parson would stop that — to old Mother Spuraway."

They were now full before the great portal of the church. Carthew, ahead, stopped his horse to speak to some person who seemed an acquaintance. His halting in the narrow way halted the mules with the litter. Master Hardwick had fallen into a doze. The physician and serving-man, standing their horses

together, looked up at the huge pile of the church, towering like a cliff immediately above them. On each side of the vast arched doorway had stood in niches the figures of saints. These were broken and gone — dragged down in the day when the neighbouring abbey was closed. But around and about, overhead and flanking the cavernous entrance, had been left certain carvings — a train of them — imps and devils and woe-begone folk possessed by the foul fiend. The fiend grinned over the shoulder of one like a monkey, he tugged like a wolf at the ear of another, he crept like a mouse from a woman's mouth. . . . Aderhold's gaze was upon the great tower against the sky and the rose-window out of which the stained glass was not yet broken. But Will looked lower. Something presently causing the physician to glance his way, he was startled at the serving-man's posture and expression. It was as though he had never seen these stone figures before — and, indeed, it proved that he had never been so closely within the porch, and that, in short, they had never so caught his attention. He was staring at them now as though his eyeballs and all imagination behind them were fastened by invisible wires to the grotesque and horrible carvings. Into his countenance came a creeping terror and a kind of fearful exaltation. Aderhold knew the look — he had seen it before, in France and elsewhere, upon peasant faces and upon faces that were not those of peasants. It was not an unusual look in his century. Again,

for the millionth time, imagination had been seized and concentrated upon the Satanic and was creating a universe to command. Will shivered, then he put his hand to his ear.

"There is nothing there," said the physician, "but your ear itself."

"Mice never come out of men's mouths," said Will. The physician knew the voice, too, the dry-throated, rigid-tongued monotone. "The comfort is that most of the wicked are women."

"Then take comfort," said Aderhold, "and come away. Those figures are but the imagination of men like yourself."

But Will was not ready to budge. "Twelfth night, I was going through the fields. They were white with snow. Something black ran across and howled and snapped at me."

"A famished wolf," said Aderhold.

"Aye, it looked like a wolf. But this is what proved it was n't," said Will. "That night in Hawthorn Forest Jock the forester set a trap. In the night-time he heard it click down on the wolf and the wolf howl. He said, says he, 'I've got you now, old demon!' and went back to sleep. But at dawn, when he went to the trap, there was blood there and a tuft of grizzled hair, but nothing else. And so he and his son followed red spots on the snow — right through the forest and across Town Road. And on the other side of the road, where the hedge comes down, they lost it clean — not a drop of blood nor

the mark of a paw on the snow. But the dog they had he ran about, and at last he lifted his head and bayed, and then he started — And where, sir, do you think he led them? He led them to the hut of old Marget Primrose between Black Hill and Hawthorn Brook. And Marget was lying huddled, crying with a bloody cut across her ankle. And they matched the hair from the trap with the hair under her cap."

"They did not match with care," said Aderhold. "And there are many ways by which a foot may be hurt."

"Nay," said the serving-man, "but when they brought the trap and thrust her leg in it the marks fitted." He continued to stare at the stone wolf tearing the ear. "That's been four years, and never since have I been able to abide the sight of a wolf! . . . Witches and warlocks and wizards and what they call incubi and succubi and all the demons and fiends of hell, and Satan above saying, 'Hist! this one!' and 'Hist! that one!' and your soul lost and dragged to hell where you will burn in brimstone, shrieking, and God and the angels mocking you and crying, 'Burn! Burn forever!' — Nay, an if they do not get your soul, still they ravage and ruin what you have on earth — blast the fields and dry the streams, slay cow and sheep and horse, burn your cot and wither your strength of a man. . . . Thicker than May flies in the air — all the time close around you, whether you see them or you don't see them — monkeys and wolves and bat wings flapping. . . .

branches a singing and fluttering of birds. The distance shimmered; here was light and here were violet shadows and everywhere hung the breath of spring. From a hilltop they saw, some miles away, roofs and a church tower. "Hawthorn Village," said Will. "The Oak Grange is two miles the other side."

Master Hardwick parted the curtains of the litter and called to the physician. His heart, he said, was beating too slowly; it frightened him, he thought it might be going to stop. Aderhold reassured him. He had a friendly, humorous, strengthening way with his patients; they brightened beneath his touch, and this old man was no exception. Master Hardwick was comforted and said that he thought he could sleep a little more. His lean hand clutched the other's wrist as he stood dismounted beside him, litter and mules and Will on the sumpter horse having all stopped in the lee of a green bank disked with primroses. Master Hardwick made signs for the physician to stoop. "Eh, kinsman," he whispered. "You and I are the only Aderholds in this part of the world. And you are a good leech — a good leech! Would you stay at the Oak Grange for your lodging, man? I've no money — no money at all — but I'd *lodge* you —"

The miles decreased between the cavalcade and the village. Aderhold was riding now alone, Carthew still ahead, and Will fallen back with the litter. Looking about him, the physician found something very rich and fair in the day and the landscape. Not

for a long time had he had such a feeling of health and moving peace, a feeling that contained neither fever nor exhaustion. There was a sense of clarity, strength, and fineness; moreover, the scene itself seemed to exhibit something unusual, to have a strangeness of beauty, a richness, a quality as of a picture where everything is ordered and heightened. It had come about before, this certain sudden interfusion, or permeation, or intensity of realization, when all objects had taken on a depth and glow, lucidity, beauty, and meaning. The countryside before him was for an appreciable moment transfigured. He saw it a world very lovely, very rich. It was noble and good in his eyes — it was the dear Earth as she might always be. . . . The glow went as it had come, and there lay before him only a fair, wooded English countryside, sun and shadow and the April day.

He saw the village clearly now, with a sailing of birds about the church tower. Carthew, who had kept steadily ahead, occupied apparently with his own meditations, checked his horse and waited until the other came up with him, then touched the roan with his whip and he and the physician went on together.

There was something about this young man that both interested and repelled. He was good-looking and apparently intelligent. Silence itself was no bar to liking, often it was quite the reverse. But Carthew's was no friendly and flowing quiet. His silence

had a harsh and pent quality. He looked often like a man in a dream, but the dream had in it no suavity, but appeared to contemplate high and stern and dreadful things. Aderhold looked instinctively first at a man's eyes. Carthew's eyes were earnest and intolerant. In the lower part of his face there was something that spoke of passions sunken, covered over, and weighted down.

The two rode some little distance without speaking, then Carthew opened his lips abruptly. "How do you like this country?"

"I like it well," said Aderhold. "It is a fair country."

"Fair and unfair," answered the other. "It rests like every other region under the primal Curse — The old man, back there, has taken a fancy to you and calls you his kinsman. Do you expect to bide at the Oak Grange?"

"I think it truth that I am his kinsman," answered Aderhold. "For the other — I do not know."

"He is misliked hereabouts," said Carthew. "He is old and miserly. Those who have goods and gear like him not because he will not spend with them, and those who have none like him not because he gives nothing. The Oak Grange is a ruinous place."

The village now opened before them, a considerable cluster of houses, most of them small and poor, climbing a low hill and spreading over a bit of meadow. The houses were huddled together, but

they enclosed a village green and here and there rose old trees, or showed a tiny garden. At the farther end, on the higher ground, the church lifted itself, dominating. Beyond it ran the highway still. The landscape was fair, with hill and dale, and to the right, against the horizon, violet-hued and misty, an old forest.

Aderhold looked somewhat wistfully at the scene before him. He had passed through much of harm and peril. Body and mind he wanted rest, quiet routine, for a time some ease. "It looks a place where peace might be found," he said.

"Five years ago," said Carthew, "we had the sweating sickness. Many died. Then all saw the shadow from the lifted Hand."

"It is wholesome now?"

"Aye," answered the other, "until sin and denial again bring bodily grief."

Aderhold glanced aside at his companion. The latter was riding with a stern and elevated countenance, his lips moving slightly. The physician knew that look no less than he had known the serving-man's.

"Is it not," demanded Carthew, "is it not marvellous how the whole Creation groaneth and travaileth with the knowledge of her doom! How contemptible and evil is this world! Yet here we are sifted out — and not the wise man of old, nor the heathen, nor the ignorant, nor the child in his cradle is excused! Is it not marvellous how, under our very feet, men and women and babes are burning in

hell! How, for Adam's sin, all perish save only the baptized believer — and he is saved in no wise of his own effort and merit, but only of another's! How God electeth the very damned — and yet is their guilt no whit the less! Is it not marvellous!"

"Aye, fabulously marvellous," said Aderhold.

"The sense of sin!" pursued Carthew. "How it presses hard upon my heart! The sense of sin!"

Aderhold was silent. He possessed a vivid enough realization of his many and recurring mistakes and weaknesses, but, in the other's meaning, he had no sense of sin.

They came to the village and rode through it, the litter arousing curiosity, allayed every few yards by Will's statements. Aderhold observed the lack of any sympathy with the sick old man, even the growling note with which some of the people turned aside. There was the usual village traffic in the crooked street, the small shops and the doorways. Children were marching with the geese upon the green, where there was a pond, and near it the village stocks. Housewives, with tucked-up skirts and with pattens, — for an April shower had made mire of the ways, — clattered to and fro or sat spinning by window or door. Many of the men were in the fields, but there were left those who traded or were mechanic, as well as the aged, sitting, half-awake, half-asleep, in sunny spots. It was the usual village of the time, poor enough, far from clean, ignorant and full of talk, and yet not without its small share of what

then counted for human flower and fruition, nor without promise of the future's flower and fruition.

They rode by the church, set in dark yews. Almost in its shadow rose a plain stone house. "Master Thomas Clement, the minister's," said Carthew. "Hawthorn hath a godly and zealous pastor! The town behind us is all for prelates and vestments and a full half at least of the old superstitions. But Hawthorn and the country to the north have purged themselves as far as they safely may."

Out upon the open road again they saw to the left, back among trees upon a low hilltop, a large and well-built house. "Carthew House," said Carthew, "where I live. But I think that I will ride on with you to the Oak Grange."

Presently, leaving the highway, they took a rough and narrow road that led, first through fields and then through uncultivated country, toward the great wood that had been for some time visible. "Hawthorn Forest," said Carthew. They rode a mile in silence, the wood growing darker and taller until it reared itself immediately before them. To the right, at some little distance from the road and almost upon the edge of the forest, stood a thatch-roofed cottage with a dooryard where, later, flowers would bloom, and under the eaves a row of bee-hives. "Heron's cottage," said Carthew. "Old Heron lives there, who in the old times was clerk to the steward of the castle."

They entered the wood. It was dark and old,

parts of it not having been cut since Saxon times. Their road, which was now hardly more than a cart track, crossed but an angle, the Oak Grange lying beyond in open country. But for some minutes they were sunk in a wilderness of old trees, with a spongy, leaf-thickened earth beneath the horses' hoofs. The sunshine fell shattered through an interlacing of boughs just beginning to take on a hue of spring. Every vista closed in a vaporous blue.

A woman was gathering faggots in the wood. As they came nearer she straightened herself and stood, watching them. She was young and tall, grey-eyed, and with braided hair the colour of ripe wheat. "Heron's daughter," said Carthew when they had passed. "She should cover her hair like other women with a cap. It is not seemly to wear it so, in braids that shine."

They were presently forth from the forest; before them a stretch of fields no longer well husbanded, a stream murmuring among stones, a bit of orchard, and an old, dilapidated dwelling, better than a farm house, less than a manor house, all crusted with lichen and bunched with ivy. A little removed stood the huge old granary that had given the place its name, but it, too, looked forlorn, ruinous, and empty. "The Oak Grange," said Carthew. "People say that once it was a great haunt of elves and fairies, and that they are yet seen of moonlight nights, dancing around yonder oak. They dance — but every seven years they pay a tithe of their company to hell."

CHAPTER VI

THE MAN WITH THE HAWK

ADERHOLD saw no fairies, though sometimes of moonlight nights he pleased his fancy by bringing them in his mind's eye in a ring around the oak. Hours — days — weeks passed, and still he abode at the Oak Grange.

Together he and Master Hardwick had gone over an ancient record. There was the Aderhold line, intertwining with the Hardwick. The blood-tie was not close, but it was there. Back in the reign of the sixth Henry they found a common ancestor in one Gilbertus Aderhold, slain on Bosworth Field. The blood-warmth was between them. Moreover, the old man had turned with a strong liking to this present Aderhold, and besides all there was his fear of illness and death. How well to have a leech always at hand! At last it came to "Will you live here for your roof and keep? I could not give you money — no, no! I have no money to give."

Refuge — security — here in this silent place, behind the great screen of Hawthorn Wood. . . . Aderhold stayed and was glad to stay, and served the old man well for his keep. The region grew to know that here was old Master Hardwick's kinsman, brought with him when he came back from London,

to live with him and doubtless become his heir. He was a leech. Goodman Cole, living by the forest, fell ill of a racking cough and a burning fever, sent for the doctor at the Grange, was swiftly better, and sang the leech's praises. As time wore on he began to be sent for here and there, chiefly to poor people's houses. Eventually he doctored many of such people, now in the village, now in the country round-about. Few of the well-to-do employed him; they sent to the town for a physician of name. He asked little money for his services; he did not press the poor for payment, and often as not remitted the whole. He earned enough to keep him clad, now and then to purchase him a book.

He soon came to the conclusion that whatever store of gold Master Hardwick might once have had, it was now a dwindling store. In whatever secret place in his gaunt, bare room the old man kept his wealth, he was, Aderhold thought, nearing the bottom layer. There was a rueful truth in the anxiety with which he regarded even the smallest piece of either metal he must produce and part with. And if, at the Oak Grange, there was little of outgo, there was still less of income. The land which went with the Grange was poor and poorly tilled. There was a cot or two with tenants, dulled labourers, dully labouring. Mostly they paid their rent in kind. He heard it said that in his middle life Master Hardwick had ventured with some voyage or other to the Indies, and had received in increase twenty times

his venture. If so, he thought that his venture must have been but small.

Master Hardwick kept but the one man, Will the smith's son, who did not sleep at the Grange, but came each morning and cared for the horse and the cow and the garden. Within doors there was old Dorothy, who cooked and cleaned, and, now in and now out, there strayed a lank, shy, tousle-headed boy, her nephew. The old house was dim and still, as out of the world as a house may be. Master Hardwick rarely stirred abroad. There was in truth a lack of health. The physician thought that the old man had not many years to live. Aderhold set himself with a steady kindness to doing what could be done, to giving sympathy and understanding, and when the old man wished it, companionship. Sitting in the dim house with him, facing him at table over their scant and simple fare, listening to his brief talk, the physician came to find, beneath a hard and repellent exterior, something sound enough, an honesty and plain-dealing. And Master Hardwick, with a hidden need both to feel and receive affection, turned and clung to the younger man.

Visitors of any nature rarely came to the Oak Grange. The place was as retired as though fern-seed had been sprinkled about and the world really could not see it. Once, during this early summer, Harry Carthew came, riding across the stream upon his great roan. But this day Aderhold was away, one of the tenants breaking a leg and a small child being

music. There was a sermon, and it was directed against Puritan and Presbyterian, and more especially against that taint of Republicanism which clung to their Geneva cloaks. No such imputation breathed against the surplice. *The Divine Right of Kings.—The duty of Passive Obedience.—Authority! Authority! Authority!* It rolled through the church, boomed forth with passion.

Aderhold, coming out into the sunshine, walked through the town and found himself upon the London road. It was high summer, the sun yet far aloft, and when it sank the round pearl of the moon would rise. He had not before walked upon this road. An interest stirred within him to view the country toward the Rose Tavern, travelled through in the darkness that night. He left the town behind him and walked southward. Between two and three miles out, he saw before him a little rise in the road, and crowning it, a gibbet with some bones and shrivelled flesh swinging in the chains. It was nothing uncommon; he had seen in France a weary number of such signposts, and on this great road, coming north from London, he had twice passed such a thing. It was so fair and soft a summer's day, the gauzy air filled with dancing sunbeams, the sky a melting blue — the very upright and cross of the gibbet faded into it and seemed robbed of horror. Indeed, long usage had to the eyes of most robbed it of frightfulness at any hour, unless it was in the dead of night when the chains creaked, creaked, and something sighed.

The traffic of the road went talking and jesting by, with hardly a glance aside at the arm across the sky.

Aderhold sat down upon the opposite bank, amid fern and foxglove, and with his chin in his hand regarded the gibbet. Now and again man and beast passed, but they paid no attention to the dusty, seated figure. For the greater while the road lay bare. He gazed, dreaming, and through the mists of time he seemed to see Judea. . . .

At last he spoke. "Carpenter of Nazareth! Man as we are men, but a Prince in the house of Moral Genius! Born with thy heritage, also, of an ancient, savage faith, in thine ears, still, old saws of doom, on thy lips at times hard sayings of that elder world, in thy mind, yet unresolved, more than one of the ancient riddles. . . . But thou thyself, through all the realm of thy being, rising into the clearer light, lifting where we all shall lift one day, transfiguring life! . . . Genius and Golden Heart and Pure Courage and Immortal Love. . . . Condemned by a Church, handed over by it to the secular arm, gone forth to thy martyr's death—and still, Sage and Seer! misunderstood and persecuted,—and still thou standest with the martyrs . . . slain afresh by many, and not least by those who call themselves thine. Wisdom, freedom, love. . . . Love—Love—Love!"

The fox-gloves nodded around him. He drew toward him a long stem and softly touched, one by one, the purple bells. "Freedom—love! . . . Thou

flower! When shall we see how thou flowest into me and I into thee?"

He let the purple stem swing back, and with his hands about his knees again regarded the gibbet; then, when some minutes had gone by, rose and pursued his way. Another half-hour and he came to a place where three roads met. A passing shepherd boy told him the name was Heron's Cross-Roads. It was a lonely place, wold and stunted wood, and in an angle, amid heath and briar, was set a blackened stake. Aderhold went across to it. In the wood was a rudely cut name, with a word or two below; the stake was set through the heart of a suicide. Nettles were about it, and some one passing had thrown an empty and broken jug of earthenware. It lay in shards. Aderhold knelt, gathered them together, and rising, laid the heap beneath the hedge.

Back upon the highway, he turned his face again to the town. It was a long way to the Oak Grange, and Master Hardwick was concerned if the house were not closed and fast at a most early hour. *Heron's Cross-Roads.* As Aderhold walked an association arose with the name. Heron — that was the name of the old man who owned the cottage on the edge of Hawthorn Forest. He was not there now; the cottage had been shut up and tenantless since early summer. He and his daughter were gone, Will had told him, on a long visit to the old man's brother, the earl's huntsman who lived in the castle wood above the town. No one knew when they would be

back. Most of their furnishings and household things had been loaned here or there. The dairy woman had taken their cow, some one else the beehives. Heron! He had a moment's drifting vision of the girl gathering faggots in the forest. It passed and the present day and landscape took its place. Soon he came again to the rise of ground and the gibbet so stark against the blue. He hesitated, then paused, resting as he had rested before upon a stone sunk in the wayside growth.

A horse and rider emerged with suddenness from a sunken lane upon his left, and stood still in the middle of the road — a fine horse, and a fine, richly dressed rider, a man of thirty-five with a hawk upon his gauntleted fist. Turning in the saddle he looked about him, and espying Aderhold where he sat, called to him.

"Hey, friend! Have the earl and his train passed this way?"

"I have not seen them, sir."

The other glanced around again, then beckoned with an easy command. Aderhold rose and went to him, to find that he was wanted to hold the hooded falcon while the horseman waited for the hawking party from which some accident had separated him. Aderhold took the peregrine from the other's wrist and stood stroking softly with one finger the blue-black plumage. The rider rose in his stirrups, swept the horizon with his eye, and settled back. "Dust in the distance." His voice went with his

looks — he seemed a rich and various person, who could show both caprice and steadfastness. Now he glanced downward at Aderhold. "Ha, I had not observed you before! — A travelling scholar?"

"A travelling physician, an it please you," said Aderhold, smoothing the bird with his finger, "biding at present at the Oak Grange, beyond Hawthorn Village."

"You take," said the horseman with a glance at the gibbet, "a merry signpost to rest beneath!"

"It is neither merry nor dismal," said Aderhold, "but a subject for thought. That which swung there swings there now — though shrunken and dark and answering to no lust of the eye. But that which never swung there swings there now neither. I trouble it not. It is away from here."

The other swung himself from his saddle. "I had rather philosophize than eat, drink, or go hawking — and philosophers are most rare in this region!" He took his seat upon a heap of stones, while his horse beside him fell to grazing. "Come, sit and talk, travelling scholar! — That fellow on the gibbet — that small, cognized part of him that was hanged, as you would say. Being hungry, he slew a deer for his own use, then violently resisted and wounded those sent to his hut to take him, and finally, in court he miserably defamed and maligned the laws of the land and the judge in his chair. So there he swings for an example to stealers of deer and resisters of constables, to say naught of blasphemers of proce-

dure and churls to magistrates! . . . What is your opinion, travelling scholar, of Authority?"

"Nay," said Aderhold, "what is yours?"

The other laughed. "Mine, Sir Prudence? — Well, at times I have thought this and at times that. Once or twice a head like Roger Bacon's has spoken. 'The swollen stream forgets its source, and the overweening son turns and with his knotted and sinewy hands chokes his mother that bore him.'"

"It is a good parable," said Aderhold. "I trust that your worship, being obviously of those in authority, will often listen to that brazen head!"

"Ah!" answered the other. "I am of that camp and not of it. My brazen head will yet get me into trouble!" He sat regarding the mound opposite, the tall upright and arm, the creaking chain, and the shapeless thing, now small, for most of the bones had fallen, which swung and dangled. "And, friend, what do you think of this matter of the Golden Age, man's perfection, Paradise, the friendship of angels and all wisdom and happiness lying, in the history of this orb, *behind* us?"

"If it were so," said Aderhold, "then were it well to walk backwards."

"So saith my brazen head! — Hark!"

It was a horn winding at no great distance. There came a sound of approaching horsemen, of voices and laughter. The waiting cavalier rose to his feet, caught his horse by the bridle and mounted. Aderhold gave him back the falcon. The earl and his

train, a dozen in all, gentlemen, falconers, and grooms, coming across the fields, leaped the hedge and crowded into the road, gathering into their number the rider with the hawk. Aderhold heard him named as "Sir Richard." He waved his hand to the physician — all rode away with a flash of colour and a blare of sound. A few moments, and there was only the bare highway, the little rise of ground, and the gibbet with its outstretched arm against the blue and serene sky.

Aderhold, keeping on to the town, passed along its bustling high street, and down the steep slope, beneath the shadow of the great church and the castle in its woods above, to the river and its many-arched, ancient bridge. Before him lay the fair country between the town and Hawthorn village. He travelled through it in the late, golden light, and at sunset came into Hawthorn. Children were playing and calling in the one street and several lanes, on the green, by the pond, and the village stocks. The alehouse had its custom, but, as he presently saw, most of the inhabitants of Hawthorn were gathered in a buzzing cluster before the church. A post, riding from London north, had passed through the village and left behind a dole of news. Among his items, principal to Hawthorn was this: The King, they say, will presently of his good pleasure, lighten the pains and penalties now imposed upon Papists.

Aderhold, touching the fringe of the crowd,

caught a glimpse of Master Clement, standing upon the church steps, haranguing. He caught the words, "The Scarlet Woman . . . Babylon . . . Lighten? Rather double and treble and quadruple —" Near the minister he saw Harry Carthew. He did not pause; he went by like a moth in the dusk. As the moon rose he came to the stream before the Grange, crossed it by the footbridge, and went on beneath the fairy oak to the house where one candle shone from a single window. In the middle of the night he was wakened by some one calling and throwing pebbles against his casement. The miller, a mile down the stream, was ill and groaning for the leech.

CHAPTER VII

JOAN

It was May three years since Joan had smelled the apple tree in blossom by the well, or had marked the heartsease amid the grass. She drew her bucket of water, flashing, dripping, and cold, rested it upon the well-stone, and regarded with grey eyes the cottage and its handbreadth of garden.

She sighed. There had been much of advantage in that long sojourn with her uncle the huntsman, in his better house than this, a mile in the castle wood, above the town so much greater than Hawthorn Village! There had been the town to walk to, the bright things to see, the bustle in the streets, the music in the church, the occasional processions and pageants, the fairs and feast days. For the castle itself, the great family was not often there, but the housekeeper had been friendly to her, and she had been let to roam as she pleased through the place, half-mediæval stronghold, half new walls and chambers echoing Tudor luxury. Four times in the three years the family had been in residence, and then there were other things to watch, though at a most respectful distance! . . . Once there had been a masque in the park, and, as many figures were needed, there had come an order from the countess.

A page had brought it, and had explained in detail, what was wanted. There was to be a whole pageant of scenes from the mythology. She was to enact a virgin who had been very swift of foot — she was to run swiftly from north to south across the great pleasaunce — a young gentleman, who would be running likewise, would throw before her, one after the other, three yellow apples. She would stoop and pick them up while he ran on. She nodded. "Yes, I know. Atalanta." The page, who was younger than herself but comely and court-bred, evinced surprise. "Wherever, Phyllis, didst get that learning?" She said that her father was clerkly and talked to her of things in books. . . . The masque! It was a world to remember, the masque! How beautiful all things had been, and everybody — and kind! But there had never been but the one masque, and soon the family had gone away.

She was thinking, as she stood by the well, that now perhaps they would come back this May and she would not be there. She drew a long sigh, and missed the castle, the park and the wood, the town and the sight of the river and the bridge, over which something was always passing. She missed, too, her uncle the huntsman, who had died; missed his larger house and the greater coming and going; missed her room, where, standing at her window, she saw the moon rise behind the Black Tower. And now her uncle was dead who had been a single man, and who had kept them from month to month and

year to year with his loud protest each time they talked of lifting a burden and going back to Hawthorn Forest. . . . But he was dead, and his house passed to the new huntsman. Joan and her father loaded their clothes and such matters upon a cart, mounted it themselves, and with some farewells to castle neighbours took the road to their own small cottage, miles away.

She sighed, but then, with her eyes upon the heartsease, determined to make the best of it. It was not as though she did not love the cottage and the garden, where presently all the flowers would bloom again, and Hawthorn Forest, where she had wandered freely from childhood. She did love them, she had a warm love for them; and sometimes at her uncle's she had pleased herself with being pensive and missing them sadly. She loved her father, too; the old clerk and she were good friends, so good friends, in an age of parental severity and filial awe, as to have scandalized the housekeeper at the castle. Moreover, though they were poor and had always lived so retired, and though the country hereabouts afforded few neighbours, and though she had never known many people in the village, having been but a young maid when she went away, there were those whom she remembered, and she looked forward to a renewal of acquaintance. And the day was very rich and fair, and a robin singing, and waves of fragrance blowing from the fruit trees, and she was young and strong and innately joyous. She

broke a branch of apple blossom and stuck it into the well water; she stooped and plucked a knot of heartsease and fastened it at her bodice throat. Then she lifted the bucket to her head, and moved with it, tall and steady, over the worn stones of the path to the cottage door.

Arrived within, she fell to her baking, in a clean kitchen with doors and windows wide. She was a notable cook, her mother having trained her before she died. Moreover, what she touched she touched like an artist. She made no useless steps or movements, she neither dallied nor hurried; all went with a fine assurance, an easy "Long ago I knew how — but if you ask me *how* I know —!" She sang as she worked, a brave young carolling of Allan-à-Dale and John-à-Green and Robin Hood and Maid Marian.

The good odour of the bread arose and floated out to mingle with the maytime of the little garden. Old Roger Heron, short, ruddy, and hale for all he was so clerkly, came in from his spading. "That smells finely!" he said. He dipped a cup into the well water and drank.

"Aye, and it is going to taste finely!" answered Joan.

"'I have heard talk of bold Robin Hood,
And of brave Little John,
Of Friar Tuck and Will Scarlet,
Locksley and Maid Marian —'"

Her father put down the cup, moved to the settle, and sitting deliberately down, began with delibera-

tion one of his talks of a thinking man. "Look you, Joan! Goodman Cole and I have been discoursing. We were talking of religion."

"Aye?" said Joan. She spread a white cloth upon the table and set in the midst a bow-pot of cherry bloom. "Religion. Well?"

"You should say the word with a heavier tone," said old Roger. "'Religion.' — Things are n't here as they were at your uncle's — rest his soul! Modesty in religion and a decent mirth seemed right enough, seeing that the earl was minded that way and on the whole the town as well. So the old games and songs and ways went somehow on — though everything was stiffening, even there, and not like it was when I was young and the learned were talking of the Greeks. But times have changed! It seems the Lord wishes gloom, or the minister says he does. If it was begun to be felt in the castle and the town, and it was, — your uncle and I often talked about it, — it shows ten times more here. Aye, it showed three years ago, but Goodman Cole says it grows day by day, and that now if you appear not with a holy melancholy you are little else than a lost soul!"

"'Holy melancholy' and 'lost souls,'" said Joan. "I know not why it is that those words together sound to me so foolish. — Doth it help anything when I am sad?

"'— Friar Tuck and Will Scarlet,
Locksley and Maid Marian —'"

"Stop, child!" said old Roger. "I'm in earnest and so must you be. Look you, Joan! you're all I've got, and folk will be fanciful about all they've got and try to guard it all around. And it came into my head while Goodman Cole was talking — and it was he who put it there, talking of your looks, and saying that you had better go mim-mouth to church, and that you had a strange way of looking straight at a body when you spoke, which did n't become a woman, who ought always to go with a downcast look — it came into my head, I say, that we're poor and without any protector and fairly strange here now, and how evil tongues are as common as grass, and I said to myself that I'd give you a good cautioning —"

"Mim-mouth and downcast look and go to heaven so!" said Joan. "I wonder what that heaven's like!"

"You must n't talk that way," said old Heron. "No, I know, you don't do so when others are by, but you'll forget sometime. Mistress Borrow at the castle said that you were a very pagan, though an innocent one! That came into my head, too, while he talked. And another thing came that sounds fanciful — but a myriad of women and girls have found it no fancy! Listen to me, Joan. Since we got our new King, and since the land has grown so zealous and finds Satan at any neighbour's hearth, there's been a growing ferreting out and hanging of witches. In Scotland it's a fever and a running

fire and we're not as far as the antipodes from Scotland. Now I'm not denying that there are witches; the Bible says there are, and so, of course, there must be. But it knocks at my head that many a silly old woman and many a young maid has been called a witch that was none! And it came to me that Hawthorn's not the castle and the castle wood, and that if Mistress Borrow called you pagan and said that you stepped and spoke too freely for a woman, it's like that some here might take it on themselves to think pure ill —"

"I see not how they could," said Joan. "There is no ill to think. — Do you mean that I am not to sing about Robin Hood and Maid Marian?"

"I like to hear you," said old Roger; "but are n't there godly hymns? Use your own good sense, my girl."

Joan at the window looked out upon the flowering trees and the springing grass and robin redbreast carolling in the pear tree. When she turned her eyes were misty. "I like to sing what I feel like singing. If it chances to be a hymn, well and good — but a forced hymn, meseems, is a fearful thing! I like to go free, and I like not a mim-mouth and a downward look. But I like not to bring trouble on you, and I do not like either to have them set upon me for ungodliness, nor to have some fool cry upon me for a witch! So I'll be careful. I promise you. She laid the trenchers upon the table and turned out from its pan a warm and fragrant loaf. "I'll be careful —

oh, careful! — And now when are we going to get our beehives from the forester's wife?"

That afternoon she took her distaff and sat in the doorway and span. The cottage stood some distance from Hawthorn Forest road, but there was a narrow greened-over path that wound between. The robin sang lustily; daffodils, edging the walk to the gate, were opening their golden cups. Old Heron had gone a mile to engage Hugh the thatcher to come to-morrow to mend the roof. Joan span and span and thought of the castle and the masque.

An hour passed. The gate-latch clicked and she looked up. An old woman, much bent and helping herself with a knobby stick, was coming toward her between the rows of daffodils. When she reached the doorstone Joan saw how wrinkled and drear were her face and form. "Good-day," she said in a quavering voice.

"Good-day," answered Joan.

"Good-day," said the old woman again. "You don't remember me, but I remember you, my pretty maid! I mind you running about in the woods, playing as it were with your shadow, with your hair braided down! Now you wear it under a cap as is proper. I'm Mother Spuraway, who lives beyond the mill-race."

"I remember now," said Joan. "I had forgotten. Will you sit down?"

She brought a stool and set it for her visitor. The other lowered herself stiffly. "Oh, my old bones!

I'll sit for a minute, sweetheart, but what I wanted to ask you —" She took Joan by the apron and held her with shaking fingers. "I wanted to ask you if you would n't be Christian enough to spare me a measure of meal? I'll swear by the church door and the book of prayer that I have n't had bite nor sup since this time yesterday!" She fell to whimpering.

Joan stood, considering her with grey eyes. "Yes, I'll give you some meal. But what! They used to say that you were well-to-do."

"Aye, aye!" said Mother Spuraway. "They said sooth. I did n't lack baked nor brewed, no, nor silver sixpences! — for, look you, I knew all the good herbs. But alack, alack! times are changed with me. . . . I'm hungry, I'm hungry, and my gown's ragged that once was good and fine, and my shoes are not fit to go to church in. Woe's me — woe's me — woe's me!"

Joan went indoors and returned with a piece of bread and a cup of milk. Mother Spuraway seized them and ate and drank with feeble avidity. "Good maid — a good maid!"

"Why do they come to you no more?" asked Joan.

Mother Spuraway put down the empty cup. "Partly, there's a leech come to these parts has stolen my trade. I'll not say he does n't know the herbs, too, but I knew them as well as he, and I knew them first! But mostly, oh, dear heart! because there's been raised a hue and cry that I did n't cure

with innocence — as though I did n't cure as innocently as him! But I 'm old — I 'm old! . . . I never had aught to do even with white magic. There was healing in the herbs and that and good sense was enough. But I 'm old — old, and they bear hard upon women. . . . And I hear that there 's a buzz of talk and I may be taken up. I know Master Clement 's been against me since ever he came to the parish —" She began to weep, painful slow tears of age.

Joan looked at her with a knitted brow. "There, mother, there, mother! I would not let them that hurt me make me weep. See! I'll give you your meal, and it will all come straight." She brought her a full measure, and a great share of her baking of bread besides.

Mother Spuraway blessed her for a pitiful maid, got painfully to her feet, and said she would be going. "You've good herbs in your garden, but I see no rue. If I be straying this way again I'll bring you a bit for planting."

She went away, her stick supporting her, her eyes still searching the little leaves and low plants on each side of the garden path and the faint, winding track between gate and forest road. Joan, in the doorway, let her distaff fall and sat pondering, her elbow on her knee, her chin in her hand, and her grey eyes upon the fruit trees. "Shall I tell father — or shall I not tell father? If I tell him, he will say she must not come again. . . . And how am I going to help

her coming again?" In the end, she determined to tell her father, but to represent to him how hard it was going to be — and how it seemed to her poor-spirited, loveless, and mean — And as she got this far, she saw another visitor coming.

She knew this visitor, and springing up, went to the gate to greet her. Before she left this countryside she had often, of Sundays in Hawthorn Church, sat beside Alison Inch, the sempstress's daughter. And after she went to the castle Alison had twice been with her mother to the town, and they had climbed the hill to the castle wood and the huntsman's house to see their old neighbours, though, indeed, they had not been such near neighbours. Alison was older than she, but at the castle hers had been the advantage, she being at home with a number of goodly things, and Alison showing herself somewhat shy and deferential. But now the castle and the park and her uncle's house were a dream, and Joan was back in Heron's cottage that was not on the whole so good as the Inches' nor so near the village. Moreover, she was now almost a stranger, and knowledge and familiarity with all matters were on Alison's side, to say nothing of her year or two longer in the world. Alison felt her advantages, and was not averse to the other's recognition of them. Joan and she kissed, then moved somewhat saunteringly up the path to the doorstone.

"Mother and I went to take her new smocks to Madam Carthew, and then when we came back it

was so fine, and mother said that she would go to see Margery Herd, and if I chose I might walk on here. — The place looks," said Alison, "as though you had never gone away."

"Nay, there are things yet to do," said Joan, "and that though we've been here well-nigh a month. You would not think how hard it is to get back the gear we left with folk! They had the use until we came back, and they knew that we would come back — but now you might think that we were asking their things instead of our own! Three women have looked as black at me! We got our churn but yesterday, and the forester's wife still has our beehives. A dozen of her own, and when we ask for our poor three back again, you might suppose we'd offered to steal the thatch from over her head!"

They sat down, facing each other, on the sun-flecked doorstone.

Alison looked about her. "I've never seen daffodillies bloom like these! — Joan, I heard a story on thee the other day."

"What story?"

"They said thou hadst a lover in the town — a vintner."

"I never had a lover, town or country."

Alison made round eyes. "What! no one ever asked you to wed?"

"I said not that. I said that I never had a lover."

Alison fell to plaiting her apron, her head on one side. "Mother says that your father's that sunk in notions of the learned that he'd never think of it, but she wonders that your uncle did n't see fit to find you a husband."

"Does she? Well, one wonders over one thing and one over another."

"There are very few bachelors and marriageable men hereabouts," said Alison, "but I suppose you'll get that one of them you set your cap for."

"And why do you suppose that?"

Alison, her head still on one side, looked aslant at the returned friend. "Oh, men are all for strange and new! Your tallness, now, that most people count a fault, and that colour hair and that colour eyes . . . Yes, you'll get the one you want."

"And if I want none?"

"Oh!" said Alison, and laughed somewhat shrilly. "Have you got an elfin man for your true-love? You'll not cheat me else with your 'And if I want none?'"

Joan twirled her distaff. "I do not wish to cheat you. — And you went with the smocks to Madam Carthew's?"

Alison bent, slipped off her shoe, and shook out of it a minute pebble. "And what do you mean by that?"

"Mean? I mean naught," said Joan. "I meant that she was a great lady, and the squire's house must be fine to see. What didst think I meant?"

But Alison would not divulge. All that came was, "*I* noted you last Sunday, how you looked aside, during the singing, at the gentry in the squire's pew! But they are godly people, and if you think that *they* looked aside —"

"In God's name!" said Joan, "what is the matter with the wench?"

But before she could find that out, here came one back — Mother Spuraway, to wit. She came hobbling up the green path to the gate, and stood beckoning. Joan rose and went to her. Mother Spuraway held in her hand a green herb taken up by the root with earth clinging to it.

"It is rue, dearie," she said. "There was a clump of it left by the burned cot a little way off. So I dug it up for you —"

Joan took it. "Thank you. I'll plant it now."

"You've got company," said Mother Spuraway. "I'll not come in. But I wanted to do somewhat for you —"

She turned and hobbled off, her wavering old figure wavering away upon the twisting path.

Joan went back to the doorstone with the rue in her hand.

"Was n't that Mother Spuraway?" asked Alison. "I would n't be seen talking to her. She's a witch."

"She's no such thing," said Joan. "She's only a wretched, poor old woman. Now, what did you mean about Sunday and church?"

But her father came round the corner of the cottage, bringing with him Hugh the thatcher to have a look at the torn roof. Alison rose; the sun was getting low and she must be going. She went, and Joan, at that time, did not find out what she had meant.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SQUIRE'S BROTHER

FOUR days later she went to walk in Hawthorn Forest. It was a golden afternoon, and she had hastened her work and got it out of hand. The roof was mended, the beehives were back, the cottage taking on an air of having been lived in all this while. Old Heron earned by scrivener's work. It was not much that he found to do, but it gave them plain fare and plain clothes to wear. Joan, too, from time to time sold to a merchant flax that she had spun. . . . She had gone no way into the forest since their return, there had been each day so much to do! But to-day an image had haunted her of how the forest used to look in its garb of May.

She let the gate-latch fall behind her and went out in the grey-green gown that she had spun and dyed herself. She wore a small cap of linen and a linen kerchief. Sunday she would wear a bluish gown, and a cap and kerchief of lawn. She was tall and light upon her feet, grey-eyed and well-featured, with hair more gold than brown, with a warm, sun-flushed, smooth, fine-textured skin, and a good mouth and chin and throat. The sun was three hours high; she meant to have a long and beautiful time.

So close to the forest edge was the cottage that

almost immediately great trees were about her, leaf-mould and flowerets beneath her feet. The forest was hardly yet in full leaf. There spread about her a divine pale emerald fretwork, and gold light in lances and arrows, and closing the vistas purple light in gauzy sheets and curtains. The boles of the trees were marvels, the great spreading branches kings' wonders, every slight fern illustrious. The stir and song of hidden birds, the scurrying of a hare, a glimpse down a beechen aisle of a doe and fawn, filled a cup of delight. She was Greek to it all, a country girl of Attica. Merely to live was good, merely to vibrate and quiver to the myriad straying fingers of life, merely to be, and ever more to be, with a fresh intensity!

On she wandered with a light step and heart, now by some handbreadth of sward, now in a maze of trees. Now and then she stood still, gazing and listening and smelling the good earth. Once or twice she rested upon some protruding root or fallen log, nursed her knees and marked the minute life about her.

Happy, happy, happy! with the blood coursing warmly and sanely through her veins, with her senses keen at the intake and her brain good at combining. . . . Open places, small clearings, existed here and there in the forest with, at great intervals, some hut or poor cottage. So it was that she soon came in sight of the burned cot and trodden bit of garden whence Mother Spuraway had plucked the rue.

The place lay curiously, half in gold light, half in deep shadow. The stone chimney was standing, together with some portion of charred rafter. There were currant and gooseberry bushes, and a plum tree, but the bit of garden-hedge was broken down and all things had run to waste. Joan, drawing near, heard children's voices, and presently, touching the cleared space, came into view of six or seven village boys, who, roaming at will or sent on some errand through the wood, had found here a resting-stage and fascination. They were after something — she thought a bird's nest — in a crotch of the plum tree that brushed the blackened chimney. She stood and watched for a moment, then called to them. "Leave that poor bird alone!" Two or three, turning, laughed and jeered, and one small savage at the foot of the tree threw a stone. Joan was angry, but she could not help the bird — they probably had nest and eggs by now. She went on, past the burned cot, and was presently in the greenwood again.

After a time she found herself upon the Oak Grange road, running across this corner of the forest. She had not meant to go this way, but a memory came to her of a stream flowing over pebbles, of an old house and an oak tree around which they used to say the fairies danced at night. She walked on upon the narrow and grass-grown road, and after a little time it led her out of the wood and to the edge of the pebbly stream. There was a footbridge thrown across, but she did not mean to go over to the other

bank. She had no acquaintance at the Grange. She had heard Goodman Cole say that the old miser, Master Hardwick, was still alive, but was rarely seen without the house. Will the smith's son had once worked at the Grange, but she did not know if he were there yet. . . . She sat down on a stone at this end of the bridge, and regarded now the old ruinous house sunk in ivy, with the long grass and ragged shrubs before it, and now the giant oak where the fairies danced, and now the bright blue sky behind with floating clouds, and now the shallow, narrow river with its pebbly shore, and now she regarded all in one. *Ripple, ripple!* sang the water.

She sat there some time, but at last, with a long breath, she stood up, looked a moment longer, then turned and, reëntering the wood, faced homeward. She had strolled and sauntered and spent her time. Now the sun was getting low in the west. Presently she left the road and took the forest track that would bring her again by the burned cot.

Through the thinning wood she saw the place before her, in shadow now, except that the top of the plum tree was gold. She thought that she still heard the boys' voices. Then, just at the edge of the clearing, she came suddenly face to face with a man.

He was a tall man, plainly dressed in some dark stuff. Stopping as he did when he saw her, stepping aside a pace to give her room, he chanced to come into a ray of the last slant sunlight. It showed his face, a lined, rather strange, not unpleasing face.

He was carrying in the hollow of his arm a grey and white cat. The creature lay stretched out, half-dead, blood upon its fur.

"Ah," said Joan, "it was that they were tormenting!" She stood still. She was sympathetic with animals; they were like everything else, living and loving to live. She thought they were very like human beings.

"Aye," said the man. "But it can recover. It is starved as well." He looked at this chance-met young woman. "I meant to carry it back to Dorothy at the Grange," he said. "But I am on my way to visit a sick man and it will be much out of my road. Do you live anywhere near?" He knit his brows a little. He thought that by now he knew all faces for a long way around, but he did not know her face.

"Aye," said Joan. "I live at Heron's cottage. — If you wish me to, I'll take her and give her milk to drink and let her lie by the hearth for a while."

They were standing beneath the very last line of trees, before there began the bit of waste and the ruined garden. The village boys were there yet, turned — all but two of them — to some other idle sport about the chimney and the fallen beams. These two, loath to give up the beast they were tormenting, and childishly wrathful against the intruder, stood watching him from behind a thorn bush.

"Will you do so?" said Aderhold. "That is well!

I am going your way through the wood. I will carry it until we reach the path to the cottage."

They moved from the clearing and the sight of the thorn bush. It was dim now in the wood, with an evening wind and darkness stealing through. They walked rather swiftly than slowly.

"I heard that Goodman Heron had come back," said Aderhold. "You are his daughter?"

"Yes. I'm Joan."

"You have been away a long time."

"Aye. Three years come Saint John's Eve."

"Three years. — I have been here three years."

"You are the physician?" asked Joan. "You live at the Oak Grange with Master Hardwick?"

"Aye. At the Oak Grange."

"They say that fairies dance there and that a demon haunts it."

"'They say' is the father and mother of delusion."

"I would wish there were no demons," said Joan, "but some fairies are not ill folk. But the minister saith that God hates all alike."

They came to the edge of the forest, before them the threadlike green path to Heron's cottage. "I must go on now by the road," said Aderhold. Joan held out her hands and he put in them the white and grey cat. "You are a good maid to help me," he said. "I have little power to do aught for any one, but if I can serve you ever I will." He turned to the road and the sick man, she to the cottage gate.

The next morning there came a visitor, indeed,

to Heron's cottage, Master Harry Carthew, the squire's brother, who fastened his horse to the elm at the gate, and came up the path between the daffodils in his great boots and his sad-coloured doublet and wide-brimmed hat. Joan, watching from the window, — her father was just without and would meet him, — thought how handsome a man he was, but also how stern was his aspect, stern almost as if the world were all a churchyard, with graves about. . . . It seemed that he had some writings that he wished copied. As she moved about the kitchen she heard his voice in explanation. The voice, she thought, was like the gentleman, a well-made voice, and yet hard, and yet melancholy, too. She heard him say that he would ride by in a day or so for the writing — and then he said that the day was warm and asked for a cup of water.

Old Heron turned his head. "Joan!"

Joan filled a cup with fresh well water, set it on a trencher for salver, and brought it forth to the squire's brother. He lifted it to his lips and drank. Goodman Cole's advice to the contrary, Joan stood with a level gaze, with the result that she was aware that as he drank he looked steadily at her over the rim of the cup. It was not a free or distasteful look, rather it had in it melancholy and wonder. He put the cup down and presently went away.

Two days thereafter he came with other papers to be copied. A pouring rain arrived upon his heels and he must sit with old Heron in the kitchen until it

was over. The room was bright and clean. Joan, having put for him her father's chair, sat to one side spinning; old Heron took a stool. They were yeoman stock, and the squire's brother was gentry. Carthew spoke little and the others waited for him to speak. The room was quiet save for the whirr of the wheel and the rain without. The white and grey cat lay by the hearth. Old Heron had thrown fresh faggots on the fire, and the tongues of flame threw a dancing light.

The little speech there was, and that solely between the two men, fell upon the affairs of the country. The discovery of the Gunpowder Plot was seven months old, but England still echoed to the stupendous noise it had made. Old Heron said something that bore upon the now heavily penalized state of the Catholics.

"Aye, they pulled down their own house on their own heads!" answered Carthew. He spoke with a stern, intense triumph. "I would have them forth from England! There is warrant for it in all histories. As the Spaniards pushed out the Jews, so I would push them out!"

The rain stopped; he rose to go. Old Heron opening the door, let in a burst of fresh sweetness. Joan stood up from her wheel, and, as Carthew passed, curtsied. He made an inclination of his head, their eyes met. There was that in his look that both challenged and besought, that, at all events, left her troubled enough.

Again two days and he came to recover what was copied. Again she sat and span, and again she was conscious that he looked at her rather than at her father, and that, though he spoke aloud only to her father, there was some utterance trying to pierce its way to her. He went away — but the next day he came again, when there was no looking for him.

Her father was away to the village. She was at the well, beneath the apple tree, by the heartsease bed. She turned from lifting the cool, brimming, dripping bucket, and saw him close beside her.

"Good-day," he said.

"Good-day, sir. — He is not here. Father is not here!"

"I am sorry for that," he answered; then, after a silence in which she became aware that he was fighting, she knew not why, for breath, "But you are here."

"Aye," said Joan. "I — I have so much to do." She left the bucket on the coping of the well and started toward the cottage. "Father went but a little while ago. You may overtake him, sir, —"

Carthew stood before her. "I have seen you at church three times. I have seen you here three times. For years I had not thought of earthly toys — my mind was set on the coming of the Kingdom of God. . . . And now *you* — *you* come. . . . I think you have bewitched me."

Joan's heart beat violently. A strong presence was beside her, before her. She wrenched herself free.

"You must not speak so, sir. You must not speak so, Master Carthew! I am naught to you — you can be naught to me." Brushing by him, she began to walk swiftly toward the cottage.

He kept beside her. "You are much to me — and I will be much to you. . . . God knoweth the struggle, and knoweth if I be damned or no! — But now I will abide in this land that I believed not in — but I will serve Him still; even where I am, I will serve Him more strictly than before! So perhaps He will accept, and not too dreadfully condemn. . . . Do not doubt that I mean honestly by you."

"What you mean or mean not, I know not!" said Joan. "But I am all but a stranger to you, sir, and I will to remain so! Will you not go? — and my father shall bring you the writings —"

Carthew's hand clasped and unclasped. He had gone further than he ever meant to go to-day. Indeed, he had no plan, no gathered ideas. He might have pleaded that he was himself a victim, struck down unawares. Forces within had gathered, no doubt, for a violent reaction after violent, long-continued repression, and chance had set a woman, young and fair, in the eye of the reaction — and now in his soul there was a divided will and war, war! His brow showed struggle and misery, even while his eyes and parted lips desired wholly.

With effort he won a temporary control. "I did not mean to frighten you. I mean no harm. I will say nothing more — not now, at least. Yes, I will

ride away now, and come for the writing another day. — See, I am naught now but friend and well-wisher!"

That a squire's brother should conceive that he might take some slight liberty with a cotter's daughter, that he might, on a May day and none looking, snatch a kiss or steal an arm about her, was truly, in Joan's time, neither a great rarity nor a great matter. If it went no further than that, it need not be especially remembered. Rebuff with vigour, if you chose, but so that the thing ended there, it was no hanging matter! At the castle, page or esquire might have been more forward than Carthew, and Joan, though she sent them about their business, might have done so with some inward laughter. But Master Harry Carthew! He was a Puritan, strict and stern, he was always with the minister, he walked with the Bible and by the Bible. He was no hypocrite either; it was easy to see that he was earnest. Then what did he have to do with coming here so, troubling her so? Joan felt a surge of anger and fright. Something boding and pestilential seemed to gather like a mist about her.

The two, both silent now, moved out of the shadow of the fruit trees into the blossomy handbreadth before the cottage door. As they did so, Alison Inch came by the gate, saw the horse fastened to the elm, and, looking through the wicket, Carthew and Joan. If she had meant to come in or no did not appear; she stood stock-still for a

moment, then put herself into motion again and passed on.

If Carthew saw her, he paid no attention. But Joan saw her, saw her face quite plainly. When Carthew — with a sudden and harsh "Good-bye for this time; or, good-bye forever, if so be I can yet kill this thing within me!" — strode away and through the gate, and, mounting his horse, rode off with a stiff bearing, not looking back, she stood for a moment or two with a still, expressionless face, then, moving slowly to the doorstep, sat down and took her head into her hands. She was seeing again Alison's face. "That's what she meant the other day — she meant that at church I was minding, not the psalm, but that man. . . . Then, doth she mind him so herself that she looked so, there at the gate? . . . Woe's me!" mourned Joan. "Here's a coil!"

CHAPTER IX

THE OAK GRANGE

ADERHOLD sat in the moth-eaten old chair, in the bare room, beside the bed in which, seventy-odd years before, Master Hardwick had been born and in which he was now to die. The old man lay high upon the pillows. He slept a good deal, but when he waked his mind was clear, not weakened like his body. Indeed, the physician thought that the mental flame burned more strongly toward the end, as though Death fanned away some heavy and dulling vapour.

Master Hardwick was sleeping now. Old Dorothy had tiptoed in to see how matters went, and, after a whispered word, had tiptoed out again. She was fond of Aderhold — she said that the Oak Grange had been human since he came.

He sat musing in the great chair. Four years. . . . Four years in this still house. He felt a great pity for the old man lying drawn and crumpled there beside him, a pity and affection. The two were kindred. He had this refuge, this nook in the world, this home to be grateful for, and he was grateful. Moreover, the old man depended upon him, depended and clung. . . . Four years — four years of security and peace. They had been bought at a

price. He saw himself, a silent figure, watching all things but saying naught, keeping silence, conforming, agreeing by his silence. He thought a braver man would not have been so silent. . . . Four years — four years of the quietest routine, going where there was sickness and he was called, wandering far afield in a country not thickly peopled, lying musing by streams or in deep woods, or moving upon long bare hilltops with the storm sky or the blue sky, going punctually to church each Sunday, paying to the tithing-man some part of his scant earnings. . . then at the Oak Grange sitting with this old man, drawing him, when he could, out of his self-absorption and his fears. Aderhold was tender with his fears; that which weighed upon his own soul was his own fear, and it made him comprehend the other's terrors, idle though he thought they were. He thought that from some other dimension his own would seem as idle — and yet they bowed him down, and kept him forever fabricating a mask.

Four years. In the small bare room which was called his and which, through care for old Dorothy, he himself kept and cleaned, there stood an oaken press, where under lock and key he guarded ink and pen and paper and a book that he was writing. That guess at qualities, at origins and destinies, that more or less mystical vision, taste and apprehension of ground and consequence, that intuition of all things in flood, of form out of form, of unity in motion — all that in France he had outspoken, and

in speaking had like to have lost liberty and life — all that he had not spoken of here these four years, hard-by Hawthorn Village and church — all this he was striving to put there upon paper. He rose at dawn and wrote while the light strengthened; he bought himself candles and wrote at night when all the place was so still that silence grew sound. Four years —

Master Hardwick stirred, opened his eyes. "Gilbert!"

"I am here, cousin."

"How long —?"

"I do not know. You do not fail fast nor easily. Your body is courageous."

He gave him to drink. As he put down the cup Dorothy opened the door. Behind her appeared a man with a black dress, close-cut hair, and a steeple-crowned hat. Although the day was warm he had about him a wide cloak. He was short and thin, with a pale, acrimonious, zealot's face. He carried in his hand a Geneva Bible.

Dorothy stammered out, "Master Clement did not wish to wait, master — "

Clement spoke for himself. "While I waited your master's soul might have perished, for a soul can perish in a twinkling." He put the old woman aside with his hand and came forward from the door to the bed. "How do you do to-day, Master Hardwick?"

The old man made a feeble movement upon his

pillows. "I do as I have done, Master Clement, — I run rapidly toward this life's end."

"Yea," said the minister, "and I fear me that you run toward worse than this life's end! I am come — I am come, Master Hardwick, to wrestle with the Devil for thy soul! I tell thee, it stands in mortal danger of dropping from life's end into that gulf where Dives burns and is mocked from Abraham's bosom!"

Aderhold had risen. Dorothy, having placed a chair for Master Clement, was on the point of vanishing, but the minister called her back. "Stay, woman, and be edified likewise! Or wait! Call also the serving-man and the lad that I saw without. It befits that a dying man, suing for pardon to an offended King, should have his household about him."

Dorothy brought them in, Will and the boy, her nephew. The three stood in a solemn row. Long habit had made them accept old master and his ways, but they did not doubt that he stood in peril of his soul. It was proper that the minister should exhort him. They stood with slightly lifted and exalted countenances. After all, so little came into their lives to make them feel a comparative righteousness, to set them in any wise upon a platform of honour!

Master Hardwick lay awake and conscious but passed beyond much speaking. Aderhold withdrew into the shadow of the bed-curtains, and out of

this twilight regarded Master Clement. He knew of more than one or two heroic things which this man had done. Moreover, he had heard that years before, when Calvin had by no means as yet tinctured England, Master Clement had stoutly set up his standard and kept strict vigil before it. It was whispered that he had stood in the pillory for "No Pope — and No Prelates!" Aderhold, gazing upon him, was aware that Master Clement would endure persecution as unflinchingly as, indubitably, he would inflict it. Each quality somehow cancelled the other — Master Clement was out of it — and there was left only the gross waste and suffering. . . .

Aderhold had heard priest and preacher, after pulpit cries of human worthlessness, of the insignificance of the soul, of universal and hopeless guilt, of the inflamed mind of God, of the hell which, in the course of nature, awaited every child of Adam, of the predestination of some, indeed, through grace of another, to an unearned glory, of the eternal, insufferable loss and anguish of those multitudes and multitudes and multitudes, who either had never known or heard of that remedy, or who, the Devil at their ear, had made bold to doubt its utter efficacy — he had heard and seen such men, at death-beds, in the presence of solemn and temperate Death, turn from what they preached to Reason and Love. He had heard them try to smooth away the deep and dark trenches in the bewildered brain which they themselves had done their best to dig.

He thought their conversion the saddest miracle — sad, for it did not last. Death passed for that time from their view, back they went to preach to listening throngs who must die, Inherited Guilt, Inherited, fiendish punishment, an Inherited, fearful God, an Inherited curse upon enquiry, and the humbling, indeed, of an Inherited vicarious atonement. . . . He wondered that they never foresaw their own death-bed. He thought that they never truly, bone and marrow, believed what they said, but that the reverberating voices of the ages behind them stunned, went through them, produced an automatic voice and action. To resist that insistence, to breast the roaring stream of the past — he acknowledged that it was difficult, difficult!

Three or four times in these years he had chanced to find himself together with Master Clement at some death-bed. Once he had seen him soften — a child dying and crying out in terror of the Judgement Day. "You were baptized — you were baptized —" repeated the minister to him over and over again. "I baptized you myself. You are safe — you are safe, my dear child! The Lord Christ will help you — the Lord Christ will help you —" But the child had died in terror.

To-day there was no softening in the aspect of Master Clement. This old man before him was a wretched miser hoarding gold, a solitary who in this dark old house as probably as not practised alchemy, lusting to turn lead and iron into gold, and as prob-

ably as not practised it by unlawful and demoniacal aid. Rarely was he seen in church — too feeble to come, he said; too unwilling, thought Master Clement. He did not give of his substance, he was bitter and misliked, he asked no prayers — Master Clement had many counts against him, and was fain to believe that they tallied with God's counts. He girded himself and came forth to wrestle with and throw this soul, and by the hair of its head to drag it from the edge of the bottomless pit. He wrestled for the better part of an hour.

Master Hardwick lay unwinking, high upon his pillows. Aderhold could not tell how much really entered ear and mind; the old man seemed to be regarding something far away, something growing in the distance. The pity of it, he thought, was for Will and old Dorothy and the boy; they were drinking, drinking .

At last Master Clement desisted. He stared with a fixed face at Master Hardwick who stared beyond him. "Thou impenitent old man —!" He rose and with a gesture dismissed the three in line. Will and Dorothy and the boy filed out, primed to discuss among themselves master's impenitency. "I go now, Master Hardwick," said the minister, "but I shall come again to-morrow, though I fear me thou art as utterly lost as any man in England!"

Aderhold accompanied him from the chamber into the hall. He knew that it was in order to speak with unction of the just closed exhortation; to won-

der at the minister's fervent power, and deprecate with sighs and shaken head the horrible wickedness of the human heart; to marvel that any could hold out against the truth so presented — how many times had he heard such an utterance and seen the self-congratulation behind — how many times! He knew that the pause which the minister made, unconscious as it certainly was, was a pause for the accustomed admiration. When it did not come he saw that, as unconsciously again, Master Clement's mistrust of him deepened. He knew that, for all his locked lips and eyes withheld from expression, for all his stillness, repression, and church-going, the minister liked him not. The clash of minds came subtly through whatever walls you might build around it.

"I fear, Master Aderhold," now said the minister, "that you have done little during your residence with your kinsman to bring him to repentance. Surely, in these years of such close communion, a godly man could have done much! Such a man as Harry Carthew would have had him by now day and night upon his knees!"

Aderhold sighed, then dropped the veil, and raising his head, spoke eye to eye. "I would that I could make you believe, Master Clement, that there is in this old man who is coming to die more good than ill. In these years that you speak of, I have seen that good grow, of its own motion, upon the ill. Why may it not continue, throughout oceans yet of

experience, to suffuse and gain upon and dissolve and reconcile unto itself the ill?"

Master Clement drew a sharp "Ha!" of triumph. Here was heterodoxy raising its head, and the man had always looked to him heterodox! "Ha! '*Of its own motion!*' Beware — beware, Master Aderhold! I have marked you — I am marking you still! Beware lest one day you be cited for a creeping, insidious doubter and insinuator of false doctrine!"

He went away, striding by the fairy oak in his wide cloak and steeple hat, with a pale, wrathful, intense face. Aderhold returned to the room and his patient. Master Hardwick lay upon his pillows, with a countenance much as it had been. Aderhold, saying nothing, sat beside him, and presently he fell asleep. Outside it was high summer, but cool, with a moving air and a rustling of every leaf. Hours passed, the day waned, the dusk set in. Aderhold, moving softly, made a fire in the cavernous fireplace, where, even in winter, Master Hardwick rarely wasted firewood.

When he came back the old man was awake.

"Gilbert!"

"Yes, cousin."

"I have a feeling that I am going to-night —"

"It is possible."

"Gilbert . . . you've been comfortable to me these four years. You've been a kind of warmth and stay, asking nothing, not wasting or spending, but giving. . . . They think I am rich, but I am not.

I was never very rich. . . . I ventured in the Indies' voyage and gained, and then I was a fool and ventured again and lost. Since then I have been a poor man. It is the truth. . . . Give me something to keep me up —"

Aderhold gave him wine. After a moment he spoke again. "There are creditors in the town that you'll hear from. They'll take the land — all but the bit about the house. That and the house I've willed you — kin to me, and kind as well. . . . The gold they say I've buried — I've buried none. There are twenty pieces that you'll find in an opening of the wall behind the panel there — " He pointed with a shaking hand that sank at once. "It's all that's left — and you'll have to bury me from it. . . . A miser. . . . Maybe, but what I saved only lasted me through with spare living. If I had told them of that heavy loss — my gold gone down at sea, and that, even so, it was not so much I had had to venture . . . would they have believed me? No! I was a miser — I lied and hid my gold. . . . Well, I did not tell them. . . . Do not tell all that you know and empty yourself like a wine skin —" His voice sank, he slept again.

Aderhold thought that he might sink from sleep into stupor and so die painlessly and without words. But in the middle of the night he waked again.

"Gilbert!"

"Yes, I am here."

"What did you think of all that which Master

Clement had to say? . . . How much was true and how much was false?"

"There was some truth. But much of it was false. It is false because reason and feeling, the mind and the spirit recoil from it. Whatever is, that is not."

"I never thought it was. . . . I've been called sour and hard and withholding, and maybe I am it all. But I would not make an imperfect creature and then plague it through eternity for its imperfection. . . . Gilbert —"

"Yes?"

"What would you do?"

Aderhold came and knelt beside the bed, and laid his hands over the cold and shrunken hand of Master Hardwick. "I would trust and hope — and that not less in myself than in that Other that seems to spread around us. I think that ourselves and that Other may turn out to be the same. I would think of myself as continuing, as journeying on, as surely carrying with me, in some fashion, memory of the past, as growing endlessly through endless experience. I would take courage. And if, in my heart, I knew that in this life I had at times — not all the time, but at times — been sour and hard and withholding and fearful, and if I felt in my heart that that made against light and love and wisdom and strength for all — then, as I lay here dying, and as I died, I would put that withholding and fear from me, and step forth toward better things. . . There is within you a fountain of love and strength.

Trust yourself to your higher self. . . . Hoist sail and away!"

The night passed, and at dawn Master Hardwick died. Aderhold closed his eyes, straightened his limbs, and smoothed the bed upon which he lay. Going to the window he set the casement wide. The dawn was coming up in stairs and slopes of splendour. The divine freshness, the purity, the high, austere instigation, the beginning again. . . . The dawn perpetual, never ceasing, the dawn elsewhere when here would be noon, the dawn elsewhere when here would be night — Never, from the first mists upon earth rising to the great sun, had dawn failed, dawn rising from the bath of night and sleep, dawn the new birth, the beginning again, the clean-washed. . . . Aderhold breathed the divine air, the blended solemnity and sweetness. The light was growing, a thousand beauties were unfolding, and with them laughter and song. The water rippling over the stones came to him with a sound of merriment. The window was clustered around with ivy and a spray nodded, nodded against his hand with an effect of familiarity, a friend tapping to call his attention. From some near-by bush a thrush began to sing — so golden, so clear. "O moving great and small!" said Aderhold; "O thought of all sense and soul, gathered, interfused, and aware of a magic Oneness! O macrocosm that I, the microcosm, will one day lift to and be and know that I am — O sea of all faiths, O temperer of every concept, O eternal permission

and tolerance, nurse of growth and artifex of form from form! . . . These children's masks which we lift upon a stick and call Thee, crying, Lo, this is God with the fixed face —"

He rested a little longer in the window, listening to the thrush, then turned, looked again at the quiet figure upon the bed, and going from the room wakened old Dorothy and the boy. Later that day, Will, Goodman Cole, old Heron, and a lawyer from the town being present, he searched for and found the spring that opened the panel Master Hardwick had indicated. Behind was a recess, and within it twenty gold-pieces. He gave them into the lawyer's hands for keeping.

They buried Master Hardwick in Hawthorn Churchyard. Hard upon the end of that, there appeared a merchant and a man of means from the town with a note-of-hand. The farm land, such as it was, would go there in satisfaction. The lawyer produced a will made one year before. Lacking issue and near kindred, Master Hardwick left all that he had, his creditors being satisfied, to his loving cousin, the physician, Gilbert Aderhold. What that was in reality was solely the decaying old house and the few acres of worn garden and orchard immediately surrounding it. The twenty pieces of gold, when all was paid, shrunk to three.

Aderhold dwelled solitary in the Oak Grange as he and his kinsman had dwelled solitary before. The land around went no longer with the Grange, but

there was no change else. The old tenants hung on; it still spread, poor in soil, poorly tilled, shut off from the richer vale by Hawthorn Forest. Will no longer came to the Grange; Aderhold, old Dorothy, and the boy lived in the place and kept it. There was no other money than the scant sixpences and shillings that the physician gained. To sell the house sounded well, but there was no purchaser. The place was ruinous, lonely, and without advantage, said to be haunted as well. Aderhold, only, had grown to love it, the ivied walls and the wild garden, the oak and the stream, and the room where he took from behind locked doors his book and sat and wrote. All was so quiet, still, secure, there behind the shield of Hawthorn Forest. . . .

But Hawthorn countryside and village refused to believe that the gold was gone. It was known that the dead miser had had a chest-full of broad pieces. Probably he had buried this great store — some said under the house itself, some said under the fairies' oak. Wherever it was buried, certainly the leech must know where it was; or if he did not know yet, he would. If one were to go that way through Hawthorn Forest, and come into sight of the house and see a candle passing from window to window, or hear a digging sound in the orchard or beneath the ill-named oak, that would be he. . . . A whisper arose, none knew how, that Master Hardwick had practised alchemy, and that his kinsman practised it too; that he knew how to make gold. If he knew,

then, of course, he would be making it, in the dead of night. Could you make gold alone, unaided by any but your own powers? Alchemists, it was known, did not hesitate to raise a spirit or demon. Then there was little difference between an alchemist and a sorcerer? . . . There came among the whispers a counter-statement from several cotters and poor folk. Master Aderhold was no sorcerer — he was a good leech; witness such and such a cure! Whereupon opposition sharpened the whisperers' ingenuity. Aye, perhaps the demon helped him cure as well as make gold! Came another counter — he was a good church-goer. So! *but Master Clement thinks not highly of him.*

How this vortex and whirling storm began, whose breath first stirred it up, it were hard to say. It had moved in widening rings for months, before Aderhold discovered how darkened was the air about him.

CHAPTER X

IN HAWTHORN FOREST

It was winter — a mild, bright, winter's day — when, for the second time, he met and spoke to Joan in the forest. She was standing beneath a beech tree, in her hand a dry, fallen bough which she was brandishing and making play with as though it had been a quarter-staff. She was singing, though not in the least loudly, —

> "'I have heard talk of bold Robin Hood,
> And of brave Little John,
> Of Friar Tuck and Will Scarlet,
> Locksley and Maid Marian —"'

When she saw Aderhold close to her she started violently.

"Good-day," he said. "I meant not to frighten you!"

She looked at him curiously and shook her head. "No. . . . You did not frighten me. I am not at all frighted."

He smiled. "You say that as though you were surprised at yourself."

She looked at him again with grey eyes half-troubled, half-fearless. "It is n't so hard to surprise yourself. . . . You did take that cat you gave me from the boys who were stoning her at the burned cot?"

"Yes," said Aderhold, surprised in his turn. "Why?"

She stammered. "I heard them talking, and though I believe not such things, I — I —"

"What things?"

She was silent for a moment, then faced him with courage. "I have heard talk that you don't believe what other people believe, that you deny things that are in the Bible, and that maybe you practise sorcery there in the Oak Grange. . . . And — and some one once told me that — that people like that had always familiars which went mostly like little animals such as a cat or small dog, or sometimes a bird or a frog, — and that — and that if they offered to give you such a thing for a gift and — and you took it, you signed yourself so to the Evil One. . . . But — but I do not believe such things. They are against all goodness and — and good sense."

She ended somewhat breathlessly; for all her courage, which was great, her heart was beating hard.

"You are right," said Aderhold. "Such things are against all goodness and good sense — and they do not happen. . . . I was going to see a sick man, and passing by the burned cottage, I heard the cat crying, and went and took her from the boys. She's naught but just your fireside cat. And I am a solitary man who has no familiar and knows no magic."

He drew a heavy, oppressed breath, "I did not know that there was any such talk. . . . It is miserable that there should be."

He stood leaning against a tree, with half-shut eyes. Old fears came over him in a thick and sickening wave.

"Oh — talk!" said Joan. "There's always such a weary deal of talk." She had regained her calm; at least she was no longer afraid of the physician. But for all that — and for all her comparative happiness this beautiful day and for her singing — she looked older and less care-free than she had done last year. Her face was thinner, and there appeared in her, now and again, a startled, listening air. It came now. "Do you hear a horse coming?"

At no part in the forest were you far from some cart track along which might, indeed, push a horseman. One was here now, leaving the track and coming between the tree boles. Presumably he had heard voices.

Joan rose to her feet. Her eyes were glittering. "No peace —" she said. "He leaves me no peace at all. I wish he were dead."

She spoke in a very low voice, hardly above a whisper, measured, but tinctured with both anger and dread. It was Harry Carthew, Aderhold now saw, who approached. He caught sight of them, checked the roan a perceptible moment, then came on. The great horse stopped within ten feet of the two beneath the beech tree. Carthew sat looking at them, a strange expression upon his face.

Aderhold had no knowledge of the why or wherefore of his look, though Joan's ejaculation might be

making for illumination. But his mind was preoccupied with those pale fears which her earlier speech had awakened. He was thinking only of these — or rather he was not consciously thinking at all; he was only gathering his forces forward after the recoil. He answered Carthew's look with a somewhat blank gaze. "Good-day," he said.

"Give you good-day," answered Carthew. "How long have you and Joan Heron been trysting?"

Aderhold's thoughts were still away. He repeated the word after the other, but put no meaning to it. "'Trysting' —"

It was Joan who took it up, with a flame of anger. "Who is trysting, Master Carthew? — Not one of these three — not he with me, nor I with him, nor I with you! God's mercy! Cannot a girl speak a civil word to a chance-met neighbour —"

"'Neighbour,'" said Carthew. "That is true. I had not thought of that. The Grange and Heron's cottage are not so far apart — might be said to be neighbours. — 'Neighbours' — it is easy for neighbours to meet — with this dark wood touching each house." He lifted his hand to his throat, then turned upon Aderhold with a brow so black, a gesture so violent that the other instinctively gave back a pace. "I have been blind!" cried Carthew thickly. "I have been blind!"

Aderhold, amazed, spoke with an awakening and answering anger. "I do not know what you mean, Master Carthew, — or, if I guess, seeing that your

words will bear that interpretation, — I will tell you that your bolt goes wide! — Mistress Joan Heron and I chanced to meet five minutes before you appeared before us — and I do think in my soul that it is the second time we have spoken together in our lives! And I know not your right —"

"'Right!'" broke in Joan with passion. "He has no right! And I will not have him couple my name here and couple it there! Oh, I would" — her eyes blazed at Carthew —"I would that so great a saint would leave this earth and go to heaven — if that, indeed, is where you belong!"

Carthew sat his horse, dark as a thunder-cloud, and for all his iron frame and power of control, shaking like a leaf. "I believe neither of you," he said thickly. He looked at Joan. "This is why you will not turn to me."

Her eyes flamed against him. "I never thought to hate a human creature as you have made me hate you! — And now I am going home."

She snatched up the staff with which she had been playing and turned with decision. He turned his horse also, but uncertainly, with his eyes yet upon Aderhold. Black wrath and jealousy were written in his face, and something else, a despairing struggle against total self-abandonment. "Stay a moment!" he cried to Joan. "Will you swear by God on high that you and this man have not been meeting, meeting in Hawthorn Forest?"

Joan turned, stood still the moment asked.

"Master Carthew, shall I tell you what I shall shortly do if you leave me not alone? I shall go with my father to the squire your brother, and to the minister, and to the three most zealous men in Hawthorn Parish, and I shall say to them, 'This holy and zealous young man whom I have heard you, Master Clement, call Joseph, and young David, and what-not — this same Master Harry Carthew, who will speak and exhort and pray with sinners, — this same man has for months made a harmless girl's life wretched to her, offering loathed love and insult'—"

Her voice broke; she threw up her arms in a gesture of anger and unhappiness and fled away. Carthew sat like a graven image, watching her go. He spoke to himself, in a curious voice from the lips only. "If ever I should come to hate you as now I—" and again — "She will never dare —" The last flutter of her skirt vanished among the trees. Suddenly he said with violence, "She denied it not!" and turned upon Aderhold as though he would ride him down.

The physician caught the bridle of the roan. "You are mad, Master Carthew! Look at me!"

He forced the other's gaze upon him and a somewhat cooler judgement into his eyes. Each, with his inner vision, was viewing in waves and sequences past relations, knowledge, and impressions. For the first time, general observation and lukewarm interest quickened into the keen and particular and well-warmed. Aderhold saw again Carthew at the Rose

Tavern, and Carthew upon the road; heard again Carthew's cosmic speculations and Carthew's expressed sense of sin. Four years gone by, and yet that impression remained the most deeply graved. After that came the long stretch of time in this region, and, during it, little speech, few meetings with Carthew. There had been knowledge that at times he was away, often for months, from Hawthorn, and there had been observation at church and elsewhere of the sterner sort in him of Puritan zeal and faith, together with hearsay that the minister and he were like elder and younger brother in the word, and the younger a growing power in this part of England and a chosen vessel. And there had been a kind of half-melancholy, half-artistic and philosophic recognition of the perfection of the specimen Carthew afforded. In look, frame, dress, countenance, temper, and inward being, he seemed the exactest symbol! — Nowhere further than all this had Aderhold come until to-day.

As for Carthew, with far narrower powers of reflection, and with those concentrated with hectic intensity in a small round, it might be said that in these years he had barely regarded or thought of the physician at all. Such a statement would be true of all sides but one. Master Clement had, within the past year, doubted to him any true zeal in religion on the part of the physician, and had set up a faint current of observation and misliking. It had been nothing much; at times, when he thought of it, he

marked Aderhold at church, how he looked and demeaned himself; once or twice when he had overheard some peasant speak of the leech, he had come in with his deep and stern voice. "Aye? Can he doctor thy soul as well as thy body?" But the whole together had weighed little. He had the soul of Harry Carthew to be concerned for . . . though, of course, for that very soul's salvation, it behooved to see that other lamps were kept burning. . . . Nay, it behooved for those others' salvation — for the warfare of the true saint was for the salvation of every soul alive! — All this was before the past few months. Through these months he had thought but of one thing — or if at all of another thing, then of how his own soul was on the brink of the pit, with the Devil whispering, and the heat of the flame of hell already burning within him. . . . And now, suddenly, it seemed that the physician living at the Oak Grange was a figure in the sum. He looked at him, and where before he had seen but a silently coming and going learned man, to be somewhat closely watched by God's saints lest mysterious knowledge should lead him astray, he saw now a tall man, still young, not ill-looking, with strange knowledge that might teach him how to ingratiate. . . . He spoke in a hollow voice. "I have been blind."

"Whatever you may have been," said Aderhold with impatience, "you are blind in this hour. Look at me! Not for the sake of myself, but for the sake of truth, and to guard another from misapprehension,

her health and welfare, the spiritual being meant rather than the bodily. To-day he walked his horse beside her.

"You have been riding through the forest, sir?" she asked. "It is a fine day for riding."

"Yes — I wished to enquire for a man at the North-End Farm."

He rode and she walked in silence, then she spoke in a dry, thin, and strained voice. "I was walking to Heron's cottage to see Joan. But she was not there. — She's not much like others. When she gets her work done, she's off to herself somewhere — maybe to the wood, maybe elsewhere. It's often so that you can't find her."

Now Carthew had found, too, that you could n't always find her. Suddenly his brow grew black again; he had not put that two and two together. "Alison," he said and paused.

Alison, with an air of not looking at him at all, was watching closely. "Yes, Master Carthew?"

He rode a little farther in silence, then he said determinedly: "Master Aderhold who lives at the Oak Grange —" He paused.

"Yes, sir?" said Alison.

"He is a strange man," said Carthew. "I remember when he came to Hawthorn, when I rode with him from the town, I thought him of a strange and doubtful mind. — We have not caught him tripping yet, but Master Clement holds that he thinks perversely, not according to sound doctrine."

"People say that he makes gold and hoards it," said Alison, "and that he hath a familiar." She was not interested in Master Aderhold, but she would keep up whatever ball Master Harry Carthew tossed.

"I know not as to that," said Carthew. "It is enough if he setteth up his own judgement and denieth essential doctrines. — It were surely ill for any upon whom he might thrust his company — ill, I mean, for them to be seen with him often and in close talk. In common charity any such should be warned. I dare aver he is often straying through the forest or upon this road."

Alison looked aside. She did not know yet what he would be at, but her every sense was sharpened.

"Have you ever seen," asked Carthew with careful carelessness — "have you ever chanced to see him and Goodman Heron's daughter Joan together?"

Alison walked thrice her own length upon the shadowy road before she answered. It took a little time to get it straight. It was n't Joan's soul that he was concerned about — thought one. He was putting her name with that of the leech — had he seen them together, and now was eaten with jealousy? She knew how it felt to be eaten with jealousy — thought two. If he believed that Joan played him false — put him off for another — it could not but help, his thinking that. . . .

"Oh, aye!" said Alison. "I have seen them a dozen times walking and talking together in the forest. But what a sin, sir, if he should teach her heresy!"

CHAPTER XI

THE PLAGUE

LATE that winter, after long immunity, black sickness came to the town with the great church and the castle, and cast a long, crooked finger across the river and in the direction of Hawthorn Village. In the streets of the town burned fires of juniper. Waking in the night you might hear the wheels of the death-cart. They stopped before this house, they stopped before that house. The thought trembled and shrank — one night will they stop before this house? In the daytime the bells were tolled.

Hawthorn Village tolled no bells, for to toll bells savoured of "superstitious usages." But it looked with a clammy terror at the black finger which had touched a farmhouse midway between village and town.

The plague grew worse in the town. More and yet more houses were marked and shut. The richer sort and those who could left the place, scattered through the country, not always welcome where they appeared. The mass who must stay saw the horror increase. A pall came over the place; there grew an insistent and rapid murmur of prayers. Side by side with that occurred a relaxation and neglect of usual order. The strict rule in such cases was against

people coming together in any manner of congregation whereby the infection might spread; but the watch grew sick and fear constantly sought companions. There was much drinking in alehouses and taverns, no little gathering together of one sort and another. Side by side with wild appeals and supplications to Heaven wavered a sick and wan determination to some sort of mirth. At times this spirit rose to dare-deviltry. Small crimes increased. The poor were the hardest stricken, seeing that for them starvation clanked behind disease. Theft and housebreaking grew common, while professional thieves might and did make a harvest feast. The church bells tolled. At night the death-carts increased in number, the closed houses increased in number, the juniper smoke rolled thicker and thicker.

But after one death in the farmhouse, halfway to Hawthorn, the black finger drew back. No one else at the farm was taken, the scattered houses between it and the village went unscathed; time passed and no harm came to Hawthorn. Some said the river barred the infection, others that the air was different. One or two at most called attention to the great crowding in the town, to the massed poverty and dirt, — whereas the village was open-built and reasonably clean, — and to the traffic between the town and a large seaport, whereas small was the business of Hawthorn and few the strangers. But the most part of Hawthorn Village and the country to the north of it knew otherwise and said otherwise

with unction and lifted looks. Pestilence came like comets, as a visitation and a sign from on high. Jehovah launched the one and the other. Fire against the cities of the plain — plague against prelatical towns and castles, only not Popish by a narrow line, retainers of stained glass and images, organ-players and bowers of the head, waiting but their chance to reinstate a wearing of copes and lighting of candles! The wonder was not that the plague came, but that Jehovah had so long withheld his hand! In Hawthorn Church they prayed that the plague might cease from the afflicted town, but prayed knowing that the plague had been deserved. Now that the outstretched black finger had been definitely withdrawn, the analyst might have found in the prayer of some — not of all — a flavour of triumph. Was it not also Jehovah's doing that the pure faith was so adorned with health and vindicated?

The town grew a gloomy place indeed, filled with apprehension. People viewing it from distant hills professed to see hanging over it a darkened and quivering air of its own. The streets had a deserted look, with fires burning and none around them. The death-carts went more frequently, and the bells clanged, clanged. There was a need of physicians, those in the place being overworked and one smitten. About the time that the black finger drew back from the farmhouse, Gilbert Aderhold walked to the town and offered his services. Thereafter for weeks he was busied, day and night.

Up in the castle above the town, a kinsman of the earl's stayed on after the hurried departure of the great family to another seat in an untouched countryside. Heir to a burdened estate and courtier out of favour, not pleased for reasons of his own to remove with the earl, and liking for another set of reasons the very solitariness of the huge old abode, assured that the infection would not mount the cliff and pass the castle wood, and constitutionally careless of danger, he asked leave to stay on, keep ward with the old housekeeper, the armour in the hall, the earl's regiment of books, and his own correspondence with foreign scholars. He stayed, and for exercise rode through the country roundabout, and now and then, to satisfy a philosophic curiosity, through the town itself. The ideas of the time as to quarantine were lax enough. The sick were shut away in the houses, purifying fires burned in the streets; if you were careful to avoid any who looked in the faintest degree as though they might be sickening, life and business might go on. The rider from the castle, when he came down into the place, carried with him and put often to his nostrils a quantity of medicated spices and perfumed grains from the Orient, carried in a small perforated silver box.

Riding so through the streets one day he came upon Aderhold, his foot upon the doorstep of a marked house. He drew rein. "Ha, the travelling scholar! — Are you physician here?"

"Until the trouble is abated."

"Black enough trouble!" said the rider. "Toll, toll! The place is more ghastly than a row of gibbets."

"Abroad," said Aderhold, "I have seen this sickness in a far worse form. I have hopes that it will not outlast the winter."

The other smelled at his box of spices. "Do you feel no fear, bending over their beds?"

Aderhold shook his head. "No. It is my calling."

The man on horseback kept ten feet between them and smelled continually at his silver box, but for the rest was willing to stay and talk. "That seems to be it. The soldier will run from the pest, but face a cannon mouth. The sailor rocks upon a masthead or boards a Spanish galleon with a cutlass between his teeth, but a churchyard ghost turns him into a whimpering child! Your thinker will scale Olympus and enquire of Jove direct, but the sight of torn flesh turns him pale. To each his courage and each his fear! Each a master and each a slave."

"Aye," said Aderhold briefly, "I know that well." He put his hand upon the door behind him. "I must not stay."

The other gathered up the reins. "I am dwelling at the castle. When the plague is spent, and the air again is clean and sweet, and old clothing has been burned and new put on, then, before you travel farther, come to see me there. — I have faced cannon and fought a galleon. I would go far to have speech with an authentic ghost. A brazen head

would like me well, and I am constantly considering new Dædalus' wings. But to enter that house behind you, and stand over that swollen, ghastly, loathsomely smelling and moaning thing — no, no! There I am your abject Eastern slave."

He backed his horse farther from the house.

"Ah," said Aderhold, "I, too, have a great region where Fear is my master and sets his foot upon my neck! I will enter this house, but I make no talk of Dædalus' wings — seeing that the neighbours like it not, and that they have the whip-hand! — When all's well I'll come to the castle."

The one rode away, the other entered the plague-touched house. The first, returning home, found company, come from the southward, and so reaching the castle without passing through the town. An old nobleman, father of the countess, was here, come unexpectedly from the Court, and having no knowledge of the family flitting. Now he was in an ill-humour, indeed, and yet not very fearful of the plague, and set upon resting his old bones before he pursued his further journey. Mistress Borrow, the housekeeper, promised to make him comfortable — there were servants enough — "And your Lordship will be glad to know that Sir Richard is here." With his lordship was a London physician of note, one that had sometimes been called to the old Queen. For years he had doctored his lordship; now, at special invitation, he was making this journey with him.

That evening at supper the talk was almost solely

of the plague. The physician had had experience in London; he had written learnedly upon the subject, and was reckoned an authority. He talked of preventives and plague-waters, and hoped that while, for his lordship's sake, he should not think of closely exposing himself, he might yet, with proper precautions, descend into the town and observe the general appearance of matters. He would be glad to give to the authorities or to the physicians in the place any advice in his power, — and then he fell to the capon, the venison pasty, and the canary. The old nobleman asked Sir Richard how he should get word to William Carthew, living beyond Hawthorn Village, of his presence at the castle. It seemed that there was some tie of old service a generation agone, — Carthew's father had owed a captaincy and other favours to the nobleman, — and now that he was dead the present squire and justice always came dutifully to see the great man upon the occasions when he was at the castle. "They tell me that he hath turned Puritan — or rather that his younger brother hath turned Puritan and draggeth William with him. A pack of crop-eared wretches! I should have thought better of John Carthew's son. I wish to see him just to tell him so.'

"One of the grooms shall be sent to Hawthorn to-morrow morning, sir. If your man be afraid of infection he may ride around the town and come in from this side."

But the Carthews — for both brothers would ride

from Hawthorn to the castle — were not afraid of infection. The older was unimaginative. As long as you did not touch nor go too near, you were safe enough. The younger brooded on other things, and was sincerely careless of any danger riding through the town might present. Neither was averse to seeing how the stricken place might look. The younger, who, truly, greatly influenced his brother, came with him primarily that he might be at hand if the castle, which was prelatical, opened upon religion.

It opened, but only in the person of the old nobleman. Sir Richard sat a little to one side in the great hall where the armour hung and listened as to three actors in the same play. The physician standing by the fire faintly shrugged his shoulders. The nobleman ridiculed and vituperated, the younger Puritan — for the elder was no match for his lordship — came back with verse and Scripture. Finally the first was reduced to "Insolent!" and a fine, foaming rage. Squire Carthew plucked his brother's sleeve. "No, no, Harry! Don't go so far —"

The younger Carthew made a stiff bow to his lordship and stood silent. He had answered, he knew, boldly and well, and it was much to him now to answer well and know it, to feel that he had been God Almighty's able champion. In subtle ways it tended to balance matters. It eased the sore and fearful feeling within, the anguished sensation that he was slipping, slipping, that the hand of Grace was trembling beneath him. . . .

The quarrel was too deep for any reconciliation. The old nobleman advanced no olive branches. Instead, with a "Fare you well, gentlemen! If this goes much further in England there'll be hangings and beheadings!" he rose from his cushioned chair and stalked from the hall. Sir Richard offered food and canary, but the two Carthews misliked his suavity, and the younger, at least, meant to keep no terms of any kind. They refused enter tainment. They must needs at once return to Hawthorn.

"As you please, gentlemen! — I am glad to know that the sickness has not touched your neighbourhood."

The physician now came forward; they all stood about the great table in the hall. "You are lucky if it reaches you not," said the London doctor. "I understand that you are not more than six miles away. But in great cities I have seen it skip one parish and slay its hundreds all around. For some reason the folk just there were more resistive."

A servant entering with a message from the old nobleman, he turned aside to receive it.

"Nay," said the younger Carthew with sternness, "the plague falls where God would have it fall, and falls not where he is willing to spare. He saith to his Angel, 'Smite here!' or He saith, 'Pass me by this door!' — and where is the resistance of man that you prate of? As well might the worm resist the master of the vineyard's treading foot!"

Sir Richard looked at him curiously. "Of course!

of course! Poor worm!" There fell a silence, then the last speaker, unthinkingly, merely to make talk to the great door before which stood the visitors' horses, brought forward Aderhold's presence in the town. "Hawthorn hath played the Samaritan in one person — though, I believe, indeed, that he lives beyond the village. You've given a good leech. I saw him yesterday morning in the town, going from sick to sick."

The squire spoke. "You mean one Gilbert Aderhold? Yes, he is a leech. But Hawthorn sent him not —"

The London physician, returning at the moment, caught the name, "Gilbert Aderhold! — What! I've wondered more than once what became of the man — if, indeed, you speak of the same —"

"A tall, quiet man," said Sir Richard. "A thinker who has travelled —"

"It has a sound of him," said the physician. He somewhat despised the two country gentlemen, so he addressed himself exclusively to Sir Richard. As to what followed, it must be said that he spoke alike without malice and without forethought. Indifferentist himself, dulled by personal vanity and complacence of position, and with a knowledge at least of the tolerant-mindedness of the person to whom he spoke, he possibly took not into consciousness at all the very different nature of the two who might be listening, nor realized that the man of whom he spoke dwelled in their bailiwick and not in the town. At

any rate, he spoke on with vivacity. "A man of abilities who should have risen — studied in Paris — was for a time in the Duke of ——'s household. Then what must he do but grow atheist and begin to write and teach! 'The God of Isaac and Jacob, Isaac and Jacob's idea of God. God the vast abstraction, like and differing with all times and peoples. The Bible not writ by the finger of God, but a book of Eastern wisdom with much that is gold, and much that is not. — No Fall of Man as therein told. — Salvation out of the depths of yourself and not by gift of another. — No soul can be bathed clean by another's blood.' — His book," said the physician, "was burned in an open place in Paris by the common hangman, and he himself lay a long while in prison and was hardly dealt with, nay, just escaped with life — which he might not have done but for the Duke of ——, who got him forth from France with a letter to Sir Robert Cecil, and — seeing that I had brought his Grace up from an illness which he had when he was in England — one from his secretary to me. But naturally neither Sir Robert nor I could do aught —"

Sir Richard, his brow clouded, stopped him with a gesture. "You caught my interest and held me fast — but I should have checked you at once! Now —" He bit his lip, his brows drawn together with deep vexation.

The two men from Hawthorn were standing stone still. In the elder's face, at once stolid and peremp-

tory, was only single-minded amazement and wrath. What was this that Justice Carthew and all Hawthorn had been harbouring? A Jesuit spy would have been bad enough — but atheist! — But the younger was more complex, and in him a number of impulses were working. He left it to the elder to speak, who did so, explosively. "Atheist! No one hath thought well of the man of late — but atheist! — I will promise you, doctor — I will promise you, Sir Richard —"

"Nay," said Sir Richard, no longer with suavity, "what I would have you promise, that I know you will not!" He shook himself like a great dog. "Unhappy!"

The two Carthews rode down the castle hill and through the town where people went dully to and fro with Fear in company. There rose the pungent smell of burning wood, a church bell made a slow and measured clangour. They passed between tall, gloomy, jutting houses, passed the prison with the stocks and pillory, and the great church with the sculptured portal, wound down to the river, and crossed the arched bridge. Before them rolled the yet wintry country. Mounting a hill, they saw on the horizon a purple-grey line that was Hawthorn Forest.

The younger Carthew spoke. "It comes back to me. . . . That night at the Rose Tavern when he so suddenly appeared beside old Hardwick. . . . Master Anthony Mull, of Sack Hall, who was travelling

with us, appeared to recognize him and flew out against him. . . . Wait a moment! — his very words will come back. He said — 'Black sorcerer and devil's friend!' "

That afternoon a serving-man brought to a house at the foot of the castle hill a letter to be passed on by a safe hand to the physician from Hawthorn. It came into Aderhold's hand as dusk was falling. He broke the seal and read by the light of one of the street fires. The letter — no lengthy one — came from his friend of the hawk and the silver box. It told him what the London physician had betrayed, though without malice, and to whom. It argued that it might be well to quit as quickly as possible this part of the country, or even to go forth for a time from England. It offered a purse and a horse; also, if it were wished for, a letter of commendation to the captain of a ship then lying at anchor at the nearest port, which captain, his own vessel being for longer voyages, would get him passage in some other ship touching at a Dutch port — "Amsterdam being to-day as safe as any place for a thinker — where no place is safe." The letter ended with "The younger Carthew will move, no fear! Then, my friend, move first." — An answer was to be left at the house at the foot of the hill.

Aderhold mechanically folded the letter and placed it in the breast of his doubtlet. The fire was burning in an almost deserted street. Beside it was a bench where an old tender of fires sat at times and

nodded in the warmth. He was not here now. Aderhold moved to the bench and sat down. He sat leaning forward, his hands clasped and hanging, his head bowed. After a time he sighed, straightened himself, and turning upon the bench looked about him. It was a gusty twilight with now and again a dash of rain. He looked up and down the solemn street. Some of the houses stood dark, those who had lived in them dead or fled. Behind the windows of others candles burned and shadows passed. This house he knew was stricken, and this and that. Here it was a child, here a young man or woman, here older folk. In more than one house there were many cases, a whole family stricken. . . . As he sat he heard the first cart of the night roll into the street, and a distant, toneless cry, "Bring out your dead!"

He rose and stood with a solemn and wide gesture of his hands. He waited a moment longer by the fire, then turned and went from this street into the next, where there lived behind his shop an old stationer and seller of books with whom he had made acquaintance. Here he begged pen and ink and paper, and when he had them, wrote, at no great length, an answer to the letter in his doublet. The next morning he left it at the house indicated, whence in due time it was taken by the serving-man and carried to Sir Richard at the castle. The letter spoke of strong gratitude, "but it befits not my calling to leave the town now."

The days lagged by in the stricken place. Then,

suddenly, the black finger shot out again and touched a house beyond the midway farm, so much nearer than it to Hawthorn Village. . . . A week of held breath and the finger went forward again. This time it touched a house in Hawthorn.

CHAPTER XII

HERON'S COTTAGE

IT was early spring again, and on the fruit trees pale emerald buds of yet unfolded leaves. The blackbirds came in flocks to the ploughed fields. But this year there were many fields that were not ploughed; dead men could not plough, nor those who had been to death's door and were coming halting, halting back.

Joan sat in her kitchen, on a low stool by the hearth. The room was clean, with shafts of sunlight slanting in. But her wheel was pushed back into a corner, and there lacked other signs of industry. She sat still and listless, bent over, her cheek resting upon her knees, and with her forefinger she made idle marks and letters in the ashes. The fire was smouldering out, the place seemed deadly still.

There came a knock upon the door. She raised her head, and sat with a frozen look, listening. After a minute the knock was repeated. Rising, she moved noiselessly across the floor to the window, and, standing so that she could not be seen, looked out. The rigour passed from her face; she drew a breath of relief and went and opened the door.

The sunshine flooded in and in the midst of it stood Aderhold. He looked at her quietly and

kindly. "I came again but to see if you were well and lacked naught."

"I lack naught, thank you, sir," said Joan. "And I am well — O me, O me, I would that it had taken me, too! O father, father!"

She leaned against the wall, shaken with dry sobs. The fit did not last; she was resolute enough. She straightened herself. "I've done what you told me to. Yesterday I washed and cleaned and let the sun in everywhere, and burned in the room the powder you gave me. Everything is clean — and lonely. No, I don't feel badly anywhere. I feel terribly strong, as though I would live to be an old woman. . . . I miss father — I miss father!"

"It looks so clean and bright," said Aderhold, "and your cat purring there on the hearth. Your father went very quickly, and without much suffering. His presence will come back to you, and you will take comfort in it. You will feel it in this room, and upon this doorstep, and out here among the fruit trees, and under the stars at night."

"Aye," said Joan, "I think it too. But now —" She stood beside him on the doorstep, looking out past the budding trees to the gate and the misty green twisted path that led at last to the village road. Overhead drove a fleecy drift of clouds with islands of blue. "All last night the countryside mourned low and wailed. It was the wind, but I knew it was the other too! It is sad for miles and miles to be so woeful."

"The sickness is greatly lessening. By the time the spring is strongly here it will be over and Hawthorn beginning to forget. — You have been here now three days alone. Has no one come to enquire or help?"

"Mother Spuraway from beyond the mill-race came. No one else."

"In a time like this all fear all. But presently friends will find out friends again."

"It is not that way that I am lonely," said Joan. "There are some that I care not if they never come."

He had his round to go. The sickness in the town dwindling, he had come back, when it broke over Hawthorn, to the Oak Grange. Since then he had gone far and near, wherever it struck down the poorer sort. As he turned from the cottage door, Joan stepped, too, upon the flagged path, and they moved side by side toward the gate, between the lines of green lance-heads the daffodils were thrusting above the soil. They moved in silence, almost of a height, two simply, almost poorly dressed figures, each with its load of sorrow and care for the morrow. And yet they were not old, and about them was the low ecstatic murmur of winter swiftening into spring.

"Do you remember," asked Aderhold, "that day when we chanced to meet in the forest and Master Harry Carthew came upon us?"

"Aye," said Joan, "I remember."

"Since then we have neither met nor spoken to-

gether until last week when your father was stricken and you watched for me coming from the village. — And now to-day I come only for this moment and will come no more. — Have you no close friends nor kindred?"

"They are buried with father. . . . I mean to stay on here and spin flax and keep myself. And if — I mean to stay." Her hand went out to touch the eglantine growing by the beehives. "I love it and I mean to stay."

Aderhold looked beyond at the wavy green path and the massed trees of the forest. He, too, loved this country. He had thought much here — once or twice the light had shone through. But he was ready now to go. Just as soon as there was no more sick, just as soon as the plague was gone, he meant to steal from the Oak Grange and Hawthorn countryside. He and Joan came to the little gate, and he went out of it, then turning for a moment looked back at the thatched cottage, the pleasant beehives, the fruit trees that ere long would put forth a mist of bloom. Joan stood with a sorrowful face, but grey-eyed, vital. Her hand rested upon the worn wood. He laid his own upon it, lightly, for one moment. "Good-bye," he said, "Mistress Friendly-Soul!"

She stood in the pale sunshine until he was gone from sight, then turned and went back to her kitchen. She must bake bread; there was nothing for her to eat in the cottage. She must get water from the well. She took her well-bucket, went forth and

brought it back brimming. From the faggot pile she fed the fire, then brought to the table coarse flour and other matters for the bread, mixed and worked, moulded and set to bake. And all the time she tried to feel that her father was sitting there, in the settle corner. She made the table clear again, then looked at her wheel. But she did not feel like spinning; her heart was burdened again; she sat down on the stool by the fire and bowed her head in her arms. "Day after day and day after day," she said; "day after day and day after day." She rocked herself. "And a powerful man that I hate to come again and yet again to trouble me, and father not here. . . . Day after day and day after day. . . . And I know not why it is, but I have no friends. They've turned against me, and I know not why. . . . Day after day —" She sat with buried head and rocked herself slowly to and fro. Save for the youth in her form and the thick, pale bronze of her braided hair, she might have seemed Mother Spuraway, or Marget Primrose, or any other old and desolate woman. She rocked herself, and the faggot burned apart, and the cat stretched itself in the warmth.

From outside the cottage came a thin calling. "*Joan! Joan! Oh, Joan!*"

Joan lifted her head, listened a moment, then rose and opened the door. "*Joan! Joan! Oh, Joan!*" She stepped without and saw who it was, — Alison Inch and Cecily Lukin calling to her from the green path well beyond the gate. They would come at

first no nearer. The plague had struck in the Lukin cottage no less than in Heron's, and for weeks it had closely neighboured Alison Inch and her mother. But Joan must be made to feel comrades' terror of her. "Joan! Joan! Have you got it yet? — We want but to see if you're living!"

With a gesture of anger Joan turned to reënter the cottage.

But Alison did not wish that. "Joan! Joan! We were laughing. We're not afraid if you don't come very close. — I've got something to tell you. See! I'm not afraid."

Alison came to the gate, Cecily with her. Joan no longer liked Alison, and with Cecily she had never had much acquaintance. But they were women and young, and the loneliness was terrible about her. She went halfway up the path toward them. The grey and white cat came from the cottage and followed her.

Alison regarded her with a thin, flushed, shrewish face and an expression lifted, enlarged, and darkened beyond what might have seemed possible to her nature. But Alison had drunk deep from an acrid spring that drew in turn from a deep, perpetual fount. She spoke in a thin and cutting voice. "Watching and weeping have n't taken the rose away. — What are you going to do now, Joan?"

"I do not think," said Joan, "that it is necessary to tell thee." She looked past her to Cecily. "They say your sister died. I am sorry."

But Alison had put poison into Cecily's mind. "Yes, she died. They do say that you would not be sorry if more of us died. Why people like you and — and Mother Spuraway should wish harm to us others —"

"What are you talking of?" said Joan. "I wish no harm to any —"

Cecily was an impish small piece with no especial evil in her save a teasing devil. "Oh, they say that you and a black man understand each other! Some boys told me —"

"Nay, that's naught, Cis!" said Alison impatiently. She came closer to the gate, and Joan, as though drawn against her will, approached from her side. "Joan — nay, don't come any nearer, Joan—"

"Yes?"

"There's one ill at the squire's house. Ah!" cried Alison. "Do you look joyful?"

"No — no!" stammered Joan.

Taken by surprise, shaken and unstable as she was to-day, she gave back a step, lifted her hands to her forehead. As for Alison — Alison had not expected Joan to look joyful. She had spoken, burning her own heart, to make Joan feel the hot iron, knowing that the pang she gave would not be lasting, for truly it was but one of the maidservants at the great house that was stricken and not that person of over-shadowing importance. She had believed with all her heart that it would smite Joan to the heart until she told her true — and now there had been in her

face an awful joy, though at once it had shrunk back and something piteous had come instead. But it was the first look with which Alison was concerned. There went through her a keen hope like a knife-blade. Perhaps he no longer liked Joan! — perhaps that made Joan angry, hurting her vanity — so, perhaps she would have liked to hear that he was sick of the plague! Alison stood astare, revolving Joan's look.

Cecily, who had never come before so close to Heron's cottage, gazed about her. "And Katherine Scott says there's something 'no canny' about the bees in your beehives. She says she had them while you were away to the castle, and they did naught for her and made, besides, her own bees idle and sick. But she says they make honey for you, great combs of it —"

"There is none that is sick at the squire's house," said Alison in a strange voice, "but Agnes, Madam Carthew's woman. They've taken her from the house and put her in a room by the stable, and the family goes freely forth. — Why did you look as you were glad, Joan?"

"If I did, God forgive me!" said Joan. "In the deep of me there is no ill-wishing. — Presently, the leech says, it will be all safe here, as, indeed, it's clean and sun-washed and safe to-day. Then I hope you'll both come to see me —"

Cecily gave a gibing, elfin laugh. "Are you going to live here all alone — like a witch?"

The grey and white cat had advanced beyond Joan and now stood upon the sunny path between the daffodil points. What happened none of the three saw; perhaps a dog crossed the track behind the two visitors, perhaps the creature recognized human hostility — be that as it may, the cat suddenly arched its back, its hair rose, its mouth opened.

"Ah-h!" cried Cecily. "Look at her cat!"

A curious inspiration, not of light, passed like a cloud-shadow over Alison's face. "It does n't like what you said, Cis! It's her familiar. — Come away! We'd best be going."

They turned. Lightning came against them from Joan's grey eyes. "Yes, go! And come not here again! Do you hear? — Come not here again!" Her voice followed them up the green path. "Come not here again —"

The next day she went to get wood from the edge of the forest. She had gathered her load of faggots, and was sitting upon them, resting, in her hand a fallen bird's nest, when Will the smith's son happened that way. The two had known each other to speak to in a friendly way for many a year; it used to be that, coming or going from the Grange, he might at any time stop for a minute before the cottage for a crack with old Heron and maybe with Joan herself. That time had come to an end with Joan and her father's going to the castle; when they came back he had been, as it were, afraid of new

graces and manners. Moreover, old Master Hardwick had presently died, and so Will left the employment of the Grange and had little need any more to come and go by Hawthorn Forest. It might be that, save at church, they had not seen each other for months. Moreover, he had been away to the nearest port.

Now he greeted her with friendliness and an honest-awkward speech of sorrow for old Heron's death. "He was a good man and, fegs! so learned! — Am sorry for thee, Joan. And what will't do now?"

Joan turned the grey and empty nest in her hands. "I do not know," she said drearily; then, with a backward fling of her shoulders and a lift of courage, "The cottage's mine. And I always sell the flax I spin. I'll bide and spin and keep the place."

Will shook his head compassionately. "A lass like thou —! In no time thou'dst be talked of and called ill names. Either thou must take service or marry —"

Joan turned upon him heavy-lidded grey orbs. "Why should I marry or be a serving-woman if I wish neither, and can keep myself? — Oh, I like not the way we've made this world!" She turned the nest again. "This thing of ill names — Well, ill names do not kill."

Will stood, biting a piece of thorn. "You'd see how it would turn out. No one would believe —"

He looked at her with rustic meditativeness. He was slow and country-living; he had no great acquaintance with Alison or Cecily, and it had never occurred to him to mark Master Harry Carthew, where the squire's brother rode or whom his looks pursued. He had heard of the vintner in the town, and had dimly supposed that Joan would marry him, or maybe the new huntsman or some other fine-feathered person at the castle. But now the plague had swept the town, and the vintner might be of those taken — and here was old Heron gone. He looked at her again, and the hand that held the piece of thorn against his lips began to shake a little. It occurred to him more strongly than it had done before that she was a fair woman — and then, Heron's cottage. There was a tiny plot of ground, the cow, some poultry. As things went, she had a good dowry. Will the smith's son might go farther and fare worse. It was not the right time, all Hawthorn being so gloomy and everybody afraid, and his own heart knocking at times against his side with fear. But it would n't hurt just to drop a hint. He moistened his lips. "Joan," he said; "Joan —"

And then, by the perversity of her fortune, Joan herself shook him from this base. She lifted sombre eyes, still turning the little grey nest about in her hands. "Why do you think we had the plague? The minister preached that it was sent against the town for its false doctrine, and we gave thanks that we were not as the town. . . . And then in a little

while it was upon us, and my father, who was a good man, took it and died. . . ."

Gloom that had lifted this bright afternoon on the forest edge settled again. Will the smith's son had a strong taste for the supernatural, all the emotional in him finding that vent. It could grow to light up with strange lightnings and transform every humdrum corner of his mind. He liked to discuss these matters and feel a wind of terror prick his temples cold. He spoke oracularly, having, indeed, listened to talk at the sexton's the night before. "There's always an Evil Agent behind any pest, or a comet or a storm that wrecks ships or blows down chimneys. At times God uses the Evil Agent to punish the presumptuous with — as He might give Satan leave to spot with plague the town over yonder, seeing that if it could it would have the old mass-priests back! And at other times He gives the Evil Agent leave to prick and try his chosen people that they may turn like a wauling babe and cling the closer to Him. And again there may be one patch of weed in the good corn and Satan couching and holding his Sabbat there. In which case God will send plagues of Egypt, one after the other, until every soul wearing the Devil's livery is haled forth. — Now," said Will, and he laid it off with the sprig of thorn, "Hawthorn is for the pure faith of the Holy Scriptures, so we have n't the plague for the reason the town hath it. — Again, put case that so we're to love the Lord the more. Now Hawthorn and all to the north of it is

known for religion. I've been a traveller," said Will with unction, "and I know how we're looked on, clear from here to the sea, and held up to the ungodly! Master Clement's got a name that sounds to the wicked like the trump of doom and Master Harry Carthew is n't far behind him — What did you say?"

"I said naught," said Joan.

Will closed his exposition. "Now it may be that God wisheth to prick up Hawthorn to fresh zeal, and, indeed, the sexton holds that it is so that Master Clement interprets the matter. But it seemed to me and the tinker, who was there talking, too, that the third case is the likelier and that there are some ill folk among us!" Will dropped the bit of thorn. "It 's the more likely because there 's another kind of mischief going around and growing as the plague dies off. I know myself of three plough-horses gone lame in one night, and Hodgson's cow dying without rhyme or reason, and a child at North-End Farm falling into fits and talking of a dog that runs in and out of the room, but no one else can see it. The tinker" — Will spoke with energy — "the tinker has come not long since over the border from Scotland. He says that if Hawthorn was Scotland we 'd have had old Mother Spuraway and maybe others in the pennywinkis and the caschielawis before this!"

Joan rose and lifted her bundle of faggots to her shoulders. The grey bird-nest she set between two

boughs of the thorn tree. "What are the pennywinkis and the caschielawis?"

"The one's your thumbscrew," said Will, "and the other's a hollow iron case where they set your leg and build a fire beneath."

Joan turned her face toward the cottage. Her old acquaintance walked beside her. It was afternoon and there was over everything a tender, flickering, charming light. It made the new grass emerald, of the misting trees veil on veil of soft, smiling magic. Primroses and violets bloomed as though dropped from immortal hands. The blue vault of air rose height on height and so serene and kind. . . .

Joan spoke in a smothered voice. "I would believe in a good God."

The young countryman beside her had gone on in mind with the tinker and his talk. "What did you say, Joan?"

"I said naught," said Joan.

CHAPTER XIII

HAWTHORN CHURCH

TOWN and village and all the country roundabout were growing clean of the plague. Day by day the evil lessened, the sickness stole away. It left its graves, and among those whose loss was personal its mood of grief. At large there was still a kind of sullen fear, a tension of the nerves, a readiness to attend to any cry of "Wolf!" The wolf might come no more in the guise of the plague, but there were other damages and terrors. All Hawthorn region was in a mood to discover them.

It came Sunday. The danger, at least, of congregating together seemed to have rolled away. Comfort remained, comfort of the crowd, of feeling people warm about you, gloomy comfort of "Eh, sirs!" and shakings of the head. Hawthorn, village and neighbourhood, flocked to church. Going, the people drew into clusters. The North-End Farm folk had a large cluster, and there the shaking of the head was over the possessed boy. But the widow whose cow was dead and the waggoner whose horses were lamed had their groups, too, and the largest group of all came compactly from the lower end of the village, past the green and the pond and the stocks and the Sabbath-closed ale-

house, with the tinker from Scotland talking in the midst of it.

Dark stone, gaunt and ancient, rather small than large, Hawthorn Church rose among yew trees. Within was barer than without. What of antique carving could be broken away was broken away, what could be whitewashed was whitewashed, what of austerity could be injected was injected. The Act of Uniformity loomed over England like a writing in the sky; there must be and was use of the book of Common Prayer. But parishes minded like Hawthorn used it with all possible reserves. Where matters could be pared they were pared to the quick; all exfoliation was done away with. As far as was possible in an England where Presbyterianism yet sat in the shadow of the Star Chamber and the Independents had not arisen, idolatrousness was excluded. Only the sermon was not pared. Sunday by Sunday minister and people indemnified themselves with the sermon. — You could not speak against the King; except in metaphor you could not speak against the Apostolic Succession; there were a number of things you could not speak against unless you wished to face gaol or pillory or worse. Because of this the things that you could speak against were handled with an added violence. The common outer foe received the cudgellings you could not bestow within the house. The Devil was mightily dealt with in pulpits such as this of Hawthorn, the Devil and his ministers. The Devil was invisible; even the

most materializing mind did not often get a glimpse of him, though such a thing was possible and had of course happened: witness Martin Luther and others. But his ministers — his ministers! They were many and palpable. . . .

Hawthorn Church was filled. They sat very still, men and women and children. They were peasants and yeomen, small tradespeople, a very few of the clerkly caste, one or two families of gentry. The only great enclosed pew was that belonging by prescription to Carthew House. The squire, the squire's wife, his young son, and the squire's brother sat there, where the force of the sermon could reach them first. Quite at the back of the church sat Gilbert Aderhold, a quiet, dark figure beside an old, smocked farmer. Joan sat where she had been wont to sit with her father, halfway down the church, just in front of Alison Inch and her mother. It was a dark day, the air hot, heavy, and oppressive, drawing to a storm.

Master Thomas Clement came into the pulpit wearing a black gown. He opened his Geneva Bible and laid it straight before him. He turned the hourglass, then lifting his hands to the lowering sky he smote them together, and in a loud, solemn and echoing voice read from the book before him, "*If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder. And the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake to thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, that thou hast*

not known, and let us serve them. . . . That prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God. . . . And all Israel shall hear and fear and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you. . . ."

"*. . . There shall not be found among you any one that . . . useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.*"

He ceased to read, and with another gesture of his long, thin hands, began to preach. He had a peculiar power and calibre had Master Thomas Clement. He stood in his black gown, a small man with a pale face; then his dire vision came upon him and it was as though his form gained height and dilated. He burned like a flame, a wind-tossed flame, burning *blue*. When he spoke his words came with a rushing weight. His figure bent toward the people, his lean hands quivered above his head, gesturing against the dark concave of the roof. The roof might have been an open, stormy sky, the pulpit a rock upon some plain of assemblage, the preacher a gaunt, half-clad Israelite shrilling out to the Hebrew multitude the rede of their lawgivers. *Thou shalt not suffer doubt to live! Thou shalt endure no speech of more or other paths than this one. He that differeth, he shall die!*

But it was not Sinai and some thousands of years ago and an Asiatic tribe struggling back from Egypt to some freehold of its own, or Asiatic lawgivers

building a careful theocracy. It was Europe, — it was England and the seventeenth century, — and still men like this stood in fiery sincerity and became mouthpieces for that people and its history and its laws. The order to Judah and Simeon and Levi rolled through the ages like never-cooling lava, withering and whelming vineyards of thought. *Thou shalt not suffer doubt to live. He that differeth, he shall die!* — And a thousand thousand pale shapes might rise to the inner eye and speak to the inner ear. "*We died.*"

Aderhold sat still, far back in Hawthorn Church. In his own mind he saw that he was on the edge of the abyss. He doubted much if he would escape. . . . The old farmer sitting, blue-smocked, beside him, his watery eyes fixed upon the minister, broke now and again into a mutter of repetition and comment. "Aye, aye! The misbeliever to perish for idolatry. . . . Of course he blasphemes — the misbeliever blasphemes. . . . Aye, aye! 'Why,' and 'Wherefore,' the Devil's own syllables. . . . Aye, aye! Unbelief and sorcery go together. . . . Aye, now we're at fire in this world and everlasting, lasting fire to come!"

The preacher had before him a people who had come through a narrow strait and a valley of the shadow, gathered together in a mood of strained nerves, of twitches and starts aside, of a readiness to take panic. The day was dark with heat and oppression, a sense of hush before tempest. It was a day on

which it was easy to awaken emotion. The faces of the people showed pale in the dusk, breathing became laboured. At last it grew that men and women looked aside with something like a shudder and a sigh in the dimness. It was as though they looked to see a serpent's head, fanged and crowned, lifting itself in the gloom from monstrous coils. Aderhold saw the slow turning of eyes in his direction.

He thought swiftly. He had served many in this congregation. Since, in the winter-time, his eyes had been opened, he knew of the drifting talk of his hoarding gold, of his practising alchemy there in the dark Oak Grange, alchemy, and perhaps worse. Even after his return from the plague-stricken town, even in his going through Hawthorn countryside from house to house where there were sick, helping, serving, even then he had seen doubtful looks, had known his aid taken hurriedly, as it were secretly and grudgingly. But all had not done so. There had been those too simple and too suffering and sorrowful for that, and there had been those whose minds seemed not to have taken the dye. There were some in this church of whom, in the years he had dwelt in this country, he had grown fond; folk that of their own bent felt for him liking and kindness. . . . But he did not deceive himself. He knew of none that would stand before this parching and withering wind. Heretofore the talk might have been idle talk, but now it was evident that Master Clement had at his shaken finger-ends the history in France

of Gilbert Aderhold. Friends! By what multitude of written words, of hearsay and legend — by what considerable amount of personal observation did he know how friends fell away from the denounced dreamer of dreams! . . . Poor friends! He felt no rise of bitterness against them. They would not have fallen away in physical battle; they would have stood many a strain, perhaps all but this. This was not to cow the blood; it was to cow mind and the immortal spirit. To face for a friend a wolf, a lion, or an earthly angered King, that was well! — but to face for a friend an angered God, to save him not from hell-fire and to be yourself whelmed, remediless, for eternity! Few there were who could inwardly frame the question, "Is He angered?" or "What is He that can be so angered?" or "You who would silence this man with the silence of death, are you beyond doubt the spokesmen of God and Eternity? Are you, after all, *God's* Executioners?" But they said that they were, and the human mind was clay to believe. . . . Aderhold looked over the church and thought he saw none who would not be terrified aside.

Well! he asked those questions and other questions. Mind and moral nature rose in him and stood. But he knew that his body would betray him if it could. Highly strung, very sensitive to pain, he possessed an imagination and memory vivid to paint or to bring back all manner of pangs and shrinkings of the earthly frame. No detail of any Calvary but in

some wise he knew and feared it. He felt the cold sweat dew his temples and break out upon the backs of his hands. He felt the nausea that numbed and withered the brain and brought the longing for death. . . .

Not in the beginning, the middle, or the ending of his white-heated discourse did the minister call the name of Gilbert Aderhold or say the Oak Grange. The invective, the "Lo, this is he that troubleth Israel!" only drew in circles, closer, closer, until there was no one there who did not know who was meant. The tremendous accusation was of Atheism, but in and out there tolled like a lesser bell, *Sorcery! Sorcery!* The withdrawing light, the hot, small, vagrant breaths of air, announcers of the onward rolling storm, the darkened hollow of the building with the whitewashed walls glimmering pale, the faces lifted from the benches, the square Hall pew, the high pulpit and the black sounding-board and the black figure with the lifted arms and the death-like shaken hands, and in the back of the church, all knew, even if they could not see him, the man who had made pact with the Devil. . . . A woman fainted; a child began a frightened, whimpering crying. The sands had quite run out from the upper half of the hourglass. . . .

Aderhold, close to the door, was the first of the congregation to step from the church into the open air. It would seem that those near him held back, so as to let the fearful thing forth and out. The

churchyard path stretched bare before him, between the yews to the mossed gate, and so forth from the immediate pale. There came as yet no challenge or molestation. He had looked for this; when all had risen and he with them, it had been with an inward bracing to meet at the door a writ of arrest. He looked to see the Hawthorn constable. But he was not at the door, or out upon the path, or at the gate. . . . The storm was at hand, with clouds heavy and dark as the yew trees and with a mutter of thunder. As he reached the village street, raindrops touched his face. Behind him the churchyard was astir with people, murmuring and dark. He wrapped his cloak about him, pulled his hat down against the rain, and faced homeward. Almost immediately, the church being at the village end, the cloud-shadowed country was about him.

He walked rapidly for half a mile, then halted and stood in the wind and rain, trying to think it out. It occurred to him that he might turn back through the fields and passing the village come out on the highway and strike southward to the town and the castle. He knew not if his friend of the hawk were yet at the castle. And if he were not? — and if he were? . . .

There was that at the Oak Grange which must be considered. His book — there in the quiet room behind the cupboard's oaken door, all his writing lying there — that which he was trying to put down. It turned him decisively from the town and the bare chance of reaching help. His book was his lover and

playmate and child. He put himself into motion again and went on toward the Grange, beneath the tempestuous sky, through the wind and the rain. . . . When he came within Hawthorn Forest there arrived a sudden lull. The oaks stood still around him, the raindrops fringing branch and twig and unfolding tufts of velvet leaves. Overhead the clouds drove apart, there came a gleam of intensest blue. As he moved through the forest it took on an ineffable beauty. When he came to the edge and to the stream murmuring over its pebbly strand there was a great rainbow. He crossed the footbridge and went on by the fairy oak.

Within the still old house was none but himself. Dorothy and the boy, her nephew, had been there in Hawthorn Church. They would come on but slowly; indeed, they might have stopped at a cousin's on the way; indeed, he knew not if, terrified and at a loss, they would come back to the Grange at all. They might, perhaps, have waited to beseech the minister's and the squire's protection and advice. There was a fire in the kitchen. Aderhold, spreading his cloak to dry, knelt upon the hearth, crouched together, bathed by the good warmth. But even while the light and comfort played about him there came into his mind, suddenly, with sickening strength, a thing that he had witnessed in his childhood, here in England. Again he saw a woman burning at a stake. . . . He shuddered violently, rose and left the room.

Upstairs he unlocked the cupboard and took from it a heap of closely covered manuscript. It rested upon the table before him . . . He stood for some moments with a bowed head; presently his hand stole to the leaves and caressed them. He knew what he should do; he should take the whole down to the kitchen and lay it in the fire. Since the warning of the man with the hawk he had known that that was what should be done. The knowledge had lain upon his heart at night. "I will do it to-morrow," and again, "I will do it to-morrow." The only other thing was to hide it in some deep and careful place, whence, if ever there came escape and security, he might recover it, or where, long years after he was dead, men might find it and read it. He had thought of digging beneath the fairy oak — but the fire, he knew, was the safest. . . . He gathered all together and with it in his hands went downstairs. He thought that he had decided upon the fire, but going, he had a vision of a mattock and spade resting behind an outhouse door. Now would be the time to dig, now at once! As his foot touched the oak flooring of the hall there sounded a heavy knock upon the door. It was not locked or barred; even as he stood the one uncertain instant, it swung inward to admit the men who had followed him from Hawthorn.

CHAPTER XIV

NIGHT

THE storm that had broken in the early afternoon regathered. The clouds hung low and black, the wind whistled, the rain came in gusts, now and again there was lightning and thunder. It was so dark in Heron's cottage, behind the deep, dripping eaves, that Joan moving to and fro seemed a shadow among shadows. The hearth glowed, but she held her hand from making a bright light with fresh faggots. Her mood was not for the dancing flame.

What it was for she knew not. She only knew that she was suited by the rain that dashed, by the bending fruit trees, striking the thatch with mossed boughs, the solemn roll of the thunder, the darkness and solitude. She paced the room, her arms lifted and crossed behind her head. At last a bit of unburned wood caught and sent up forked flames. Light and shadow danced about the walls. The grey and white cat came and walked with Joan, rubbing against her skirt.

The thunder rolled. Outside, the murk of the day thickened toward evening. A hand fell across the door, then pressed the latch. The door swung inward; there was a vision of a muffled figure, behind it wind-tossed trees and up-towering clouds lit by lightning.

"Who is it?" Joan cried sharply; then, as the man let drop the cloak he had been holding across his face, "Master Carthew! . . ."

The firelight, sinking, left only the smouldering coals and the room almost dark. Joan, moving swiftly across the room, seized fresh brands and threw them upon the old. A flame leaped up; the place was fairly light again. She turned upon him. "To come here — to come here —"

"Aye," he answered, "to come here." He unclasped his great cloak and let it drop on the settle, took off his steeple-crowned hat and set it on the cloak. He stood out, dark-clothed, plain as Master Clement himself in what he wore, with short-cut hair, with handsome features, haggard, flushed, and working. "Do you know whence I have come? I have come from leading men to the Oak Grange where they took and bound that atheist there and carried him away to gaol. You'll walk no more with him in Hawthorn Forest."

Joan drew a heavy, painful breath. "I walked little with him in Hawthorn Forest. But when my father took the plague he came to him. He is a good man! Aye, I was in church and heard Master Clement —"

"Nay, I think that you walked much. But now you will walk no more." He came nearer to her. "Joan, put that Satan's servant from out your mind! Turn instead to one who sinneth truly and puts oftentimes in peril his immortal soul, but is

at least no misbeliever and denier of God's Word. Joan — Joan!"

He tried to take her in his arms. She was strong and broke from him. Behind her was a shelf with some pewter jugs and dishes and small articles of use. She put up her arm and snatched from it a good and keen hunting-knife; then stood, breathing quickly, the firelight reddening the blade in her hand.

He gave a harsh and forced laugh. "Put it down, Joan! I did not mean to fright thee. I came to persuade —"

'Nay, I'll keep it by me," said Joan. "Persuade me to what? To feel love for you? That, Master Carthew, you cannot do! But you could make me feel gratitude —"

"If I took hat and cloak and went from out your door?"

"Aye, just."

"I cannot. . . . No man ever loved as I love you. . . . Here, this dusk, this Sabbath. — Think if I am in earnest. . . . Joan, Joan! If I lose for thee my immortal soul —"

She made a sound of anger and contempt. "Oh, thy little immortal soul! Be but mortal — and just!" The tears rose in her grey eyes. "See what you will do to me! Say that you were seen coming here — say that any of the times you have waited for me, waylaid me, met me against my will, you were watched — we were seen together. . . . You are a

man and a gentleman and a great man in this country. It will not harm you. But Joan Heron — but Joan Heron — it will harm her! It will provide her misery for all her days!"

Carthew struck his hand against the settle. "Is not all my name and future risked? I am not of the old England, nor of to-day's careless and idolatrous England. My world is the world of the new England, of the forces of the Lord mustering upon the straight and narrow path where there is no room for Satan's toys! And if I turn aside to Babylon and the flesh and its madness, and if my turning becomes known — Joan, Joan, you know not how great is my risk — even my worldly risk! As for the other — as for my risk of God's hatred and damnation — but I will not speak of that. . . . Enough that I am here, and that to hold you consenting in my arms would even all out and make my lead gold and my torment bliss! Joan — if you would but love me and feel how the risk is outweighed! As for security, we can manage that. Many another pair has managed that. To-day — here — with the wind and rain keeping all within doors. . . . I rode with the men some way toward the town, and then I left them, saying there were matters at home that needed. When they were out of sight, I turned through the fields and went up the stream that was all solitary, until I was over against the Oak Grange and the forest all around me. Then I turned and rode here through the forest, and fastened my horse in a hollow out there where

none may see him. . . . Joan, it is like a desert all about us — or like Paradise garden. Joan, Joan, I love you! Joan, have pity!"

There came an access of lightning with thunder and a prolonged whistling of the wind. In the warring light and darkness of the room, Carthew, as though the final spring of restraint had snapped, came close to her, put his arms about her. The lightning blazed again, and by it both saw with distinctness a man and woman standing without, their faces close to the window. In the darkness after the flash, they left it and came on to the cottage door, but as yet did not knock. Within the room, Carthew, sobered, the colour ebbing from his face, only one consideration pouring in upon his mind, released Joan and caught from the settle hat and cloak. There was a second outward-opening door, giving upon the bit of garden behind the cottage, leading in its turn to the forest. He looked toward it. She nodded, "Yes, yes, go!" He came close to her, moving noiselessly and speaking low, "Do you think they saw — saw at all?"

She shook her head. "I do not know."

"It was too dusk within. I do not think they saw. Keep counsel, Joan, for thy own sake if not for mine."

The two without knocked. Carthew crossed the floor without sound, opened the forest-facing door, and with a gesture of farewell vanished. There was a continuous noise of wind and rain; what daylight

was left and the lightning were all without; it might truly be doubted if one glancing through the window could either see or hear, the interior was so dusky, the voice of wind and wet so continuing. Joan, with a long, shuddering sigh, put down the hunting-knife, and going to the door opened it. The two who stood there were Will the smith's son and his mother. They had, it seemed, the weather clearing, walked to see the forester's people; then, the clouds returning, they had taken their leave to hurry home. But the storm had overtaken them — and they had thought to take refuge until the rain lessened in Heron's cottage. But they did not know — they thought they had better go on.

"Come in and warm and dry yourselves," said Joan.

They came in hesitatingly. They looked around them, confused and doubtful. They sat on the settle by the fire and stared at the grey and white cat. Will was trembling, and it could not be from the wet and chill, for he was used to that.

His mother was of stouter mental make. "Were you alone, Joan? It seemed to us there was somebody else —"

"Why, who else," asked Joan, "could there have been?" She looked around her. "The shadows moving along the walls do look like people."

"It looked," said Will, in a strange voice, "as though you and a shadow were locked and moving together. It looked like a tall black man." He

stared at the fire and at the grey and white cat. A fine, bead-like moisture that was not rain clung to his brow, beneath his yellow elf locks.

"No, no black man," said Joan. "I myself fancy all kinds of things in a storm."

Her woman guest was silent. She sat with bead-like blue eyes now on Joan, now upon the kitchen from wall to wall. But Will's perturbation remained. The events of the day, North-End Farm talk and the tinker's talk, the atmosphere of heat and storm, church and the denunciation of his old master's kinsman, the physician with whom at the Oak Grange he had himself been in daily contact, the talk at the forester's which had been of the marvellous, indeed, and the evident power of Satan; afterwards the dark wood, the lightning, rain, and thunder, and then the momentary spectral vision through the window, which now, it seemed, was naught — all wrought powerfully upon his unstable imagination. There flowed into his mind his long-ago adventure with the wolf that ran across the snow-field, and was trapped that night but never found . . . but old Marget Primrose was found with her ankle cut. The remembrance dragged with it another — he was again with that same physician sitting his horse before the portal of the great church in the town — the carvings in the stone struck with almost material force back into his mind that was edged already with panic. *Witches and devils.* . . . And the tinker's talk of how Scotland was beset,

and Satan buying women, old and young. . . . He had always thought of witches being old like Marget Primrose or like Mother Spuraway — but, of course, they could be young. . . . The forester's wife, that afternoon, had said something — it hummed back through his head. Her beehives were bewitched by Joan Heron's beehives. . . .

His mind was tinder to every superstitious spark. With a whistling breath and a shuffling of the feet, he rose from the settle. "We're dry and warm now, mother. — Let's be getting home."

His mother, it seemed, was ready. Her parting with Joan was somewhat tight-lipped and stony. "Seeing that you are alone now in the world 't is a pity you ever had to leave living by the town and the castle! There were fine strange doings there that you miss, no doubt —"

The two went out into the declining day. The rain had ceased, but the wind blew hard, driving vast iron-grey clouds across the sky. However, since the thunder had rolled away, one could talk. As soon as the two were out of the cottage gate and upon the serpentine green path, wet beneath the wet trees, they began to talk.

"It was something," said Will; "and then when we got within, it was nothing . . . . Mother!"

"Aye, aye," said his mother. "It was n't to be seen plain. But she was not by herself."

"Mother . . . the tinker saith that the Scotch witches all have familiars. A man or a woman or

sometimes children see such and such an one walking or talking with a tall black man, but when they get close there is only, maybe, a dog, or a cat, or sometimes a frog or a mouse. . . . But the witch-prickers always find the witch's mark where the Devil that is her familiar sucks. . . . And then the witch confesses and tells how the Devil is now tall and black like himself and now shrinks into the small beast, and how by his power she can herself change her shape." — Will shivered and his eyes glanced fearfully about. "Mother, do you think that there was something evil there?"

His mother looked steadily before her with beady blue eyes. "I don't know what I think. I think there was somebody or something there that she did n't want seen or known about — but where it went, or he went. . . . Don't you think any more that you might marry her."

Back in Heron's cottage Joan sat crouched before the fire. She fed it now constantly with wood so as to make the whole room light. A determinatlon was taking form in her mind. To-morrow she would walk to the town, and climb the castle hill, and ask for Mistress Borrow at the castle. The old housekeeper had called her a pagan, but natheless she had been fond of Joan and Joan of her. . . . Now to go to the castle, and find her in the cheerful housekeeper's room and to sit on the floor beside her with head, maybe, in her lap, and free a burdened heart and mind and ask counsel. . . . She would do it. She

would start early — at sunrise. The vigour of her purpose lightened her heart; she rose to her feet, and going to the window, looked out. It was quite dark. The storm had died away, but the sky was filled with torn and hurrying clouds. Now hidden, now silvering cloud and earth, a half-moon hurried too. Joan stood gazing, her face lifted. She thought of her father. At last she raised her arm, closed the casement, and drew across it its linen curtain. From the cupboard she took a candlestick and candle and lighted the latter with a splinter from the hearth. She set it upon the table, and going to the main door turned the large key in the lock. This done, she moved across the kitchen floor to the small door giving upon the back. The key was lost of this, but there was a heavy bar. She had lifted this to slip it into place when the door, pushing against her, opened from without. Carthew reëntered the room.

Joan uttered a cry less of fright than of sudden and great anger. "Beware," she cried, "that I do not kill you yet! Begone from this place!"

He shook his head. "No. I have watched all away. Who comes, after curfew, of a wet and wild night, to your cottage? No good folk of this region, I am sure. So we're alone now, Joan, at last!"

He made a movement past her. She saw what he was after, and, lithe and quick herself, she was there first. She had the knife again. . . . They stood facing each other in the lit room, and Joan spoke.

"Thou hypocrite!" she said; "thou pillar of

Hawthorn Church and dependence of God on high and Master Clement! Thou hope of England! Thou searcher-out of iniquity and punisher of wrong-doing! Thou perceiver of high things and the meaning of the world! Thou judge and master in thy own conceit! — Thou plain and beast-like man, who wantest but one thing and knows not love, but lust —"

He caught her in his arms. He was strong, but so was she. They struggled, swaying, their shadows, in firelight and candlelight, towering above them. They breathed hard — they uttered broken words, ejaculations. He was in the grasp of the brute past; she struggled with the energy of despair and hatred. She felt that he gained. Need taught her cunning. She seemed to give in his clasp, then, in the moment when he was deceived, she gathered all her strength, tore her arm free, and struck with the hunting-knife.

The blade entered his side. She drew it out, encrimsoned. They fell apart, Carthew reeling against the wall. The colour ebbed from his face. He felt the bleeding, and thrusting a scarf within his doublet, strove to stanch it. As he leaned there, he kept his eyes upon her. But with the suddenness of the lightning their expression had changed. Wrath and defeat and shame were written in them; desire still, but mixed now with something baleful, with something not unlike hate. The bleeding continued. He felt a singing in his ears and a mist before his eyes.

With the ice of the new mood came a sense of the peril of his position. Did he swoon here from loss of blood — grow so weak that he could not get away — be found here when day came — The scandal flared out in letters of fire before him. He saw the face of Master Clement, and the faces of other and more powerful men of the faction, religious and political, with which he was becoming strongly identified. . . . He must get away — get home — framing some story as he went. His horse was near — the streaming blood seemed less.

Joan stood like a dart, in her face blended relief and horror. They stared each at the other.

"Do you remember," said Carthew in a hollow voice, "in the forest there, I said that love might turn to hate? Beware lest it has turned!"

"You may hate me," said Joan. "You never loved me."

He took his eyes from her and moving haltingly to the door opened it. His horse was close outside, fastened within the small enclosure. Through the dark oblong, by the light of the half-moon, she saw him mount. He gathered up the reins, he held also by the horse's mane. His face looked back at her for a moment, a ghastly, an enemy's face. Then there was only the mournful night and Heron's cottage, thatch-roofed, sunk among blossoming fruit trees from which the raindrops dripped, dripped.

CHAPTER XV

NEXT DAY

At sunrise she shut the cottage door behind her, locked it, and put the key in a hiding-place under the eaves, then went down the path between the daffodils and out of the little gate. She had a basket upon her arm and within it in a blue jar a honeycomb for a gift to Mistress Borrow. It was a morning fresh and fragrant, the grass diamonded with last night's rain, the tree-tops veiled with mist, distant cocks crowing. When she came upon the road the sun was drinking up the mist; it was going to be a beautiful day.

She walked for some distance toward the village, but at a point where she saw Carthew House among the trees and the church yews were growing large before her, she turned into a path that would take her through the fields and bring her out upon the highway with the village left behind. She did not wish to go through the village, she did not wish to pass Alison Inch's door, she did not wish to come near to Carthew House.

She walked between the springing grain, and through a copse where a thrush was singing, and by a stream that was the same that murmured past the Oak Grange, and so at last came back to the high-

way. She looked back. The village roofs, the church tower, rested dark against the blue sky; light curls of smoke were rising and a great bird sailed overhead.

Before her, over hill and dale, ran the road to the town. She shifted her basket to the other arm and walked on in the golden morning. Now she was by nature courageous, and by nature also a lover of light and air, of form and colour, of diverse motion and the throb of life. In her soul the whole round earth mirrored itself as alive, and, despite black moods and fits of madness, as dominantly good and fair. What of sorrow, gloom, and care had of late clung about her, what of terror and horror the happening of the evening before had left with her, slowly lessened, grew diaphanous in the sunlight and open country. The road began to entertain her, and there came sweet wafted memories of the castle wood, of how fondly she and her father and uncle had lived together and understood one another and liked life, and of all the pleasant doings when the great family were at the castle. Music hummed in her ears again, the figures of the masque filed across the green sward.

In the fresh morning there was more or less meeting and passing on the road. A shepherd with a flock of sheep overtook her, and she stood under an elm to let them by. The shepherd whistled clearly, the sheep kept up their plaintive crying, pushing and jostling with their woolly bodies, their feet mak-

ing a small pattering sound. "To market! To market!" said the shepherd. "Are you for the market, too, pretty maid?" Farther on she overtook in her turn two or three children going on some errand and walked with them awhile. They wanted to know what was in her basket and she opened the jar and showed them the bright honeycomb, then, breaking clean skewers from a wayside hazel, dipped them in the liquid gold and gave each child a taste. They left her at a lane mouth, and she walked for a little way with two women who were carrying between them an old tavern sign painted with a sheaf of wheat and a giant bunch of grapes. When she had left these two behind and had gone some distance upon a bare, sunny road, she saw before her like a picture the river and the bridge, the climbing town and the castle. She could make out the Black Tower among the trees.

The town was quit of the plague. To the knowing there would be still visible a gloom about the place, a trailing shadow of remembered fear and loss. People would be missed from the streets, vacant houses and shops remarked. Street cries and sounds would come more sombrely and the sunshine fall less warmly. But to the stranger it would seem a town as usual. For Joan, it was not so gay and rich as once it had been, because she that looked on it was not so care-free as once she had been. But still it was to her the great town, so different from Hawthorn, so jewelled with pleasant memories. . . .

She passed the vintner's house and was glad to see that it was open and cheerful, and that therefore he had not died of the plague. At length she came to climb the castle hill, and with her heart beating fast to cross the pleasaunce and go around to a certain small door of the offices through which she would soonest gain admittance to Mistress Borrow. The sky was so blue, the grass, the flowers, the budding trees were so fair, mavis and lark and robin sang so shrill and sweet, that earth and heaven once more assumed for Joan a mother aspect. Warm, not unhappy, tears came to her eyes. She shook them back and went on over daisies and violets. She had not slept last night and the miles were long between her and Heron's cottage. She felt light-headed with the assurance of comfort and counsel, the sense that the black cloud that had gathered about her so strangely, so almost she knew not how, would now begin to melt away.

Mistress Borrow was not at the castle. Her sister, thirty miles away, was dying of a dropsy, and the housekeeper had been given leave to go to her. She had gone last week — she might be away a month. . . . The family were not there — they had gone at the first alarm of the plague. Sir Richard had stayed through it and my lord the countess's father, had stopped for a week, but they, too, were now away. . . . It was a civil-spoken girl who told her all this, a new maidservant who had no knowledge of Joan. There were men and women servitors whom

she remembered and who would remember her, but when the girl asked if, Mistress Borrow being away, she could do her errand to any one else, she shook her head. "You look dazed," said the maid. "Better come in and sit awhile." But no, said Joan, she must be getting home. So she thanked the girl, and they said good-morning to each other, and she left the little door and the flagged courtyard, and coming out under an archway found herself again upon the flower-starred grass, with the shadows of the trees showing two hours from noon. To the right stretched the castle wood, and she would go through it and see again the huntsman's house.

It rose among the trees before her, a comfortable, friendly, low, deep-windowed place. She would not go very near; she did not know the people who had it now, and truly she felt dazed and beaten and did not wish questioning or talk. She found an old, familiar oak with huge and knotted roots rising amid bracken, and here she sank down and lay with her head upon her arm and her eyes upon the place where in all her life she had been happiest. An old hound came and snuffed about her, a redbreast watched her from a bough. She lay for some time, resting, not thinking but dreaming back. At last she rose, settled the basket upon her arm, looked long at the huntsman's house, then turned away, and leaving the wood began to descend the castle hill.

When she passed through the high street of the town the church bells were ringing. She turned out

of the brighter street into one that sloped to the river, and here she came upon an open place and the prison tall and dark. She stopped short, standing in the shadow of a bit of wall. It was easy for one's own cares to make one forget, and she had forgotten Aderhold. But he would be here — there was no real gaol in Hawthorn itself, though offenders might be locked for a time in a dungeon-like room beneath the sexton's house. But a learned man and a property-owner and a man accused of the greatest crime of all, which was to deny the real existence and power of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, — such an one would be brought here. They would have haled Master Aderhold here last night. . . . She stood and gazed at the frowning mass. The windows were few and far apart and small and closely barred. To-day that was so sunshiny bright would be stifling and black enough in there. She wished that she could send in the light and air.

A man, coming, too, from the high street with his course shaped for Hawthorn Village, joined her where she stood. He was a wiry, crooked-shouldered, grizzle-headed, poorly clad person with a face of some knavery, cunning, and wildness. Over his shoulder, strung together with leather thongs, hung some small pots and pans, and in a leather pouch he seemed to carry tools and bits of metal. Joan recognized him for the tinker, who, after wandering far and wide, came back, at long intervals, to a hut just this side of Hawthorn. It appeared that on his part

he remembered her face. "From Heron's cottage, mistress? — near the Oak Grange." He seemed to cast a glance upon the prison, but then he looked at her grey eyes and her face, paler to-day than was its wont, and asked if she had walked from home. She said yes, she had been to see the housekeeper at the castle — but she was not there. "Was she walking back to Hawthorn?" Yes, she said, and began to move across the prison square. He moved with her. "I walked from Hawthorn myself this morning. Matters to buy for my trade! Shall stop here at the Boar's Head before I take the road back." To her content he left her, and she went on by the great church and down the hill to the arched bridge. But when she had crossed it, and when the river behind her lay thin like a silver crescent, she found him again at her side.

It was hot midday and the road bare of folk. She did not wish a travelling companion and would have liked to tell him so, but she was somehow cowed this noon, weary and listless where on the sunrise road she had been hopeful. She let him walk beside her, a freakish figure, vowed to mischief. Immediately he began to talk about the plague. Her father had died? — "Yes." — He had been told so. Many people had died — many people in the town, and not so many, but enough in Hawthorn and round-about. Once he saw the plague. He was lying in the heather on a hillside near a town that had it. Dark was coming. Then a great figure of a woman,

black and purple, with a veil all over, rose straight up above the roofs and chimneys. She lifted her arms and took the veil from her head, and it was crowned with shiny gold and she was the Plague — and she floated in the sky and took her veil and drew it behind her, and every roof it touched they were going to die in that house. — Yes, tinkers saw strange things, wandering over the country. There were a many strange things, were n't there? The plague left the country very fearful — and there was another strange thing, Fear! It took a man and knocked the heart out of him — but then to make up, it gave him more eyes and ears than he'd ever had before!

He looked at her aslant. "Did you ever see the Devil?"

"No."

"Then you are n't fearful," said the tinker. "Fearful folk can see him plain."

He kept silence for a little, his eyes upon a cloud of butterflies fluttering before them over a muddy place in the road, then again turned upon Joan his curious, half-squinting look. "Of course there 've been men who were n't afraid and yet have seen him. Men who were great enemies to him, and pushing him hard, and he so angry and despairing that he shows himself, tail, claws, and all! Tall Bible men and great men like Doctor Martin Luther who threw his ink-well at him. And a lot of other men — mass-priests, and bishops, and marprelates, all

the same. It's to their honour to have seen him, for so the people see how the Devil must hate them to come himself to beard them, and what a strong enemy they are to him, which means, of course, that the King of Heaven must hold them in high regard. — Even poor wights may sometimes give a good blow — just as a camp-follower might save an army or a scullion a palace! I'm not saying that I did n't get a glint of his horns myself once on Little Heath, between two furze bushes!"

Joan was not talkative. She walked steadily on, but she was tired, and her mind now seemed to drowse, and now, rousing itself, strayed far from the other's talk.

The tinker was piqued by her inattention. "And then witches and warlocks see him. — *Women* see him," he said with spite. "And not because they're his enemies neither! Ten women know him, hair and hoof, to one man. . . . For why? They knew him first, as the good Book tells us, and became his gossips in Eden Garden. So 't is that still when things go wrong 't is woman that gives them the shog. The Devil gives her the apple still, and she takes it and shakes out harm on mankind — which is why we've got a leave to keep her somewhat down! That's woman in ordinary — and then you come to witches —"

Joan's eyelids twitched.

He saw that she attended. "Witches! First they begin by having commerce with elves and fays,

green men, and such. They get into fairy hills and eat and drink there, and they dance in the moonlight around trees in the wood. But the elves are the Devil's cousins, and he's always on hand, and some night he comes smirking up, dressed now this way and now that. So the woman drops a curtsy, and he puts out his hand and gives her something, just as he did in Eden Garden. She takes it, and that seals her both sides of the Judgement Day! Pay for pay! Blood gives him strength, and so he sucks from a little place he makes upon her body — that's the witch mark that can't be made to feel pain, and that's why we strip and prick witches to find their mark, which is better proof even than their confessing! Now she's the Devil's servant and leman forever, and begins to work evil and practise the Black Art. He shows her how to fly through the air and change herself into all manner of shapes. Then she goes to his Sabbat and learns to know other witches and maybe a wizard or two, though there are n't so many wizards. They're mostly witches and demons. If you look overhead at night you can sometimes see a scud of them flying between you and the moon. Then begin the tempests of hail and thunder and lightning, and the ships that are sunk at sea, and the murrain in the cattle, and the corn blighted and ricks burned and beasts lamed and children possessed and gear taken and sickness come —"

He stopped to cough and also to observe if she

were listening. She was listening. He was saying nothing that she had not heard before. They were commonplaces alike of pulpit and doorstep. But it had all been like figures seen afar off and upon another road. Now she had come to a place in life where, bewildered, she found them about her. Joan was conscious that life was becoming like an evil dream. Just as in a dream a hundred inconsequences might form the strongest net, entangling you, withholding you from some longed-for escape, so now, awake, a hundred things so little in themselves — She never said to herself that there was a net weaving about her; the mind, struck and bewildered, could not yet give things a name, perhaps would not if it could. She only saw the gold and warmth going for her steadily out of the sunshine — and knew not how it came that they were going nor how to stop that departure. Now she said dully, "I do not believe all that," and then saw immediately that it was a mistake for any one to say that.

The tinker again looked aslant. "Most of your witches are old women. At their Sabbats you'll see a hundred withered gammers, dancing and leaping around a fire with the Devil sitting in the midst, and all sing-songing a charm and brewing in a kettle a drink with which to freeze men's blood! But each crew hath always one young witch that they call the maiden. A young and well-looking wench with red lips and she calls the dance. They were burning such an one where I was a while ago in Scotland.

She cried out, 'I be no witch! I be no witch!' to the end. But they sang and prayed her down and she burned on."

Joan moistened her lips. "Why did they think she was —"

"Ah," said the tinker, "there was a young laird she had bewitched! He peaked and pined and syne he cried out that a dirk was always turning in his side. So they found, beneath the hearth in her cot, a figure of wax with a rusted nail set in its side, and as the wax melted away, so was he to pine. And there were other tokens and matters proved on her. Beside, when they tried her in the loch she never sank at all. *Convicta et combusta* — which is what they write in witch cases upon the court book."

By now they were much advanced upon the Hawthorn road. The day was warm, the air moist and languid. Joan felt deadly tired. There swam in her mind a desire to be away, away — to find a door from this earth that was growing drear and ugly. She moved in silence, her grey eyes wide and fixed. The tinker, his throat dry with talking, drew in front of him one of the pans which he carried and in lieu of further speech drummed upon it as he walked. Presently a cart came up behind them, empty but for a few trusses of hay, and the carter known to them both, being Cecily Lukin's brother.

"Hey!" said the tinker. "Give me a lift!"

The cart stopped. "Get in!" said Lukin. He stared at Joan.

The tinker, swinging himself up, spoke with a grin. "There's room for you too —"

Joan shook her head. She made no halting, but went on by in her greyish gown and wide hat with her basket on her arm.

The carter flicked his horse, the cart passed her, left her behind, in a few minutes disappeared around a bend of the road. To the last the two men stared back at her; she seemed to hear Lukin's slow, clownish voice repeating Cecily's tattle — Cecily's and Alison's.

Hawthorn Village grew plain before her: thatched cottages, the trees upon the green, the church yews and the church tower — there flashed upon her again yesterday at church, and Master Aderhold in prison. He was a good man; despite what the minister had said, she believed that with passion — he was a good man. It had not kept them from haling him to prison. What would they do to him, what? . . . She came to the path that would spare her going through the village and turned into it from the highway. It led her by the stream and through the fields and out upon Hawthorn Forest road. Heron's cottage was in sight when she met Goodman Cole, walking to the village.

He looked at her oddly. "Good-day, Joan."

"Good-day, goodman."

"Where have you been?"

"I walked to the castle to see Mistress Borrow. But she was not there."

Goodman Cole propped himself upon his stick, full in her way in the sunny road. "We are seeing strange doings in Hawthorn Parish! Aye, strange doings we are seeing! Have you heard about Master Harry Carthew?"

"No. — Heard what?"

"Then I'll tell you," said the old man. "Yesterday afternoon Master Carthew rode a part of the way with the men who were taking the leech to the town. — And there," said Goodman Cole, "is another strange thing! That we could like an atheist well enough, and think him skilled and kindly, and all the time he was mankind's deadliest foe! 'T was the Devil sure that blinded us! — Well, as I was telling you, Master Carthew rode a part of the way. Then, having seen them well started, he turns his horse, meaning to go first to Master Clement's to consult about having a commission named, before the next assize, to look into a many things that have happened about Hawthorn, some in connection with the leech and some by themselves — and then to ride from the minister's home to Carthew House. It was stormy as we know, the kind of hot and dark storm they say witches brew. He was riding, looking straight before him, and thinking what a darkness like the darkness of the sky was over England, when what does his horse do but start aside and begin to rear and plunge — and yet there was nothing there! It lightened, and the road on all sides lay bare. And yet, in an instant, just like that! Master Carthew

was struck in the side and wounded as by a sword or dagger. It lightened again and he had time to see a tall black man dressed, bit for bit, like the leech, — and it lightened the third time and the road was bare as a blade, only he saw on the top of a bank a figure like a woman making signs to the sky. Then it fell dark, and there burst a great roar of thunder and wind and the horse began to run. He checked it just outside Hawthorn and rode around by Old Path and the fields, for he felt himself bleeding and did not wish to frighten people. So, going slowly, he got home at last, and they laid him in bed and found a great wound in his side. . . . Joan!"

"Will he die?" said Joan.

"And will you be glad if he does? . . . Wench, wench, why do you look like that?"

The old man and she faced each other, between them but a narrow space of the forest road. Her face was mobile, transparent, — a clear window through which much of her nature might be read. She had never thought to try to veil it — never until of late. It was, on the whole, a strong and beautiful nature, and none had quarrelled with the face that was its window. But of late there had come into her life to work her injury something bitter, poisonous, and dark. Fear and hatred had come, and a burning wrath against the net that was weaving, she knew not how — a wrath and helplessness and a wrath against her helplessness. All her nature flamed against a lie and an injustice. And

because she had known so little fear, and when it came it found it hard to make an entry, so it worked like poison when it was within the citadel. It was the foe she liked least; all her being rose and wrought to cast it out. But it was giving her a fight — it was giving her a fight. . . . And nowadays she had to try not to show what she thought or felt. Sometimes, by force of wit and will, she succeeded, keeping her soul back from the window of her face. She was not succeeding now, she felt. She bit her lips, she struggled, she turned her face from Goodman Cole, and stood, her hands closing and unclosing, then, the victory won, but too late to save her with him, she turned upon him a quiet face.

It was too late. A good old man, but simple and superstitious, he was staring at her with a misliking and terror of his own.

"I'd heard tales, but I would n't believe any real harm of Heron's daughter, — but God knows what to think when a woman looks like that!" He edged from her, his hand trembled upon his staff; he would evidently put distance between them, be gone on his way. "The minister saith that from the Witch of Endor on they have baleful eyes —"

He suddenly put himself in motion. "Good-day to you!" he said in a quavering voice, and went on down the road with a more rapid step than was his wont.

CHAPTER XVI

MASTER THOMAS CLEMENT

Two magistrates and certain of the clergy of the town, Justice Carthew and Master Thomas Clement from Hawthorn, sat in consultation in a room opening from the hall of assizes. Court was not sitting —it lacked a month and more of the time when judges on circuit would appear and make a gaol delivery. In the mean time a precognition was to be prepared. The case was diabolical and aggravated, involving as it did apostasy, idolatry, blasphemy, and sorcery of a dye most villanous. Evidence should not lack, witnesses must abound. On the main counts of apostasy and blasphemy the prisoner was himself convict by himself. He had been brought from the prison hard by to this room for examination, and the clergy had questioned him. But no pressure or cunning questions would make him confess idolatry or sorcery or the procuring of Master Harry Carthew's wound.

The clerk wrote down what they had — Master Clement's evidence and Squire Carthew's, together with the evidence they had gathered from others at Hawthorn, the clergy's questions and the prisoner's answers. He copied also Master Harry Carthew's written testimony, Master Carthew himself

being still in bed, fevered of his wound. There was enough and many times enough for the physician's commitment and most close confinement until assize day — enough to warrant what Carthew and the clergy urged, a petition to the Privy Council that there be especially sent a certain judge known and belauded for his strict handling of such offences, and that, pending assizes, a commission be named to take depositions and make sweeping examination throughout the Hawthorn end of the county — seeing that Satan had rarely just one in his court. Indeed, there were signs in many directions of a hellish activity, whether in pact with the leech or independent of him remained to be discovered. Hawthorn mentioned the afflicted child at North-End Farm, the great number of lamed animals, a barn consumed to ashes, and the hailstorm that had cut the young wheat.

"A woman was seen by Master Harry Carthew?"

The squire nodded. "Aye. Moreover, this long time Mother Spuraway has been suspect."

The minister of Hawthorn sat, a small, rigid, black figure, his hands clasped upon the board before him, his light-hued, intense eyes seeing always one fixed vision. His voice was unexpectedly powerful, though of a rigid quality and inclined to sing-song. "My mind is not made up as to what brought the plague to Hawthorn and the region north. But I hold it full likely that Satan was concerned to harass a godly and innocent people, godly beyond

many in England, if I say it that perhaps should not! It is well known and abundantly proved that his imps and ministers, his infidels, Sadducees, and witches go about to construct a pestilence no less readily than they do a hailstorm or a tempest that miserably sinks a ship at sea. I would have the commission take evidence upon that point also —"

The clerk, a thin, stooping, humble man, slightly coughed, then spoke deprecatingly. "If I may make so bold, your worships — the prisoner hath a manner of good reputation among some in this town. He came during the plague and healed many."

"Aye, so?" answered Justice Carthew. "About Hawthorn also may be found a few silly folk who would praise him, though none I think will praise him who were at church last Sunday! But this cargo of damnable stuff we've found will beat down their good opinion."

"The unsafest thing," said a fellow justice, and nodded portentously, — "the unsafest thing a plain man can do is to think and speak well of a heretic."

And with that serving-men from the Boar's Head near by entered, bearing a collation for the magistrates and clergy assembled. . . .

Late in the afternoon the men from Hawthorn returned home. Squire Carthew rode with pursed lips, ponderously on to Carthew House. But the minister refused an invitation to accompany him. He wished to consider these matters in his closet, alone with the Scriptures and in prayer. He put up

his horse and went into his small, chill house. There lived with him an aunt and one maidservant, and, it being late, they had his supper spread and waiting. But he would not touch the food; he had ordained for himself a fast.

With a candle in his hand he went into his small bare room and closed the door. Cloak and hat laid aside, he appeared slight and spare and sad-coloured, a man as intensely in earnest as might well be; a man, as far as his conscious knowledge of himself could light the vaults and caverns, sincere and of an undivided will to the service and glory of his God. On the table lay his Bible, open; from wall to wall stretched a space of bare floor good for slow-pacing to and fro, good for kneeling, for wrestling in prayer. The room was haunted to him; it had seen so many of what he and all his day, and days before and days after, called "spiritual struggles." But there was pleasure no less than gloom and exaltation in the haunting; there were emanations from the walls of triumph, for though his soul agonized he was bold to believe that also it conquered. He believed that he was foe of Satan and henchman of the Lord.

Terror at times overwhelmed the henchman—panic thoughts that Satan had him; cold and awful doubts of his acceptability to his overlord. But they were not lasting; they went away like the chill mists from the face of the hills. It was incredible, it was impossible that the Lord would not see his own banner, would not recognize and succour his own

liegeman! The liegeman might err and come under displeasure; good! the punishment came in agony and remorse for lukewarm zeal, in a shown sight of the evil lord to whose suzerainty he might be transferred and of that lord's dismal and horrible demesne! Nay, more solemnly and threateningly, in an allowed vision of what a disobedient liegeman would forfeit — the heavens opening and showing the rainbow-circled throne, the seven lamps, the sea of glass, the winged beasts saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" and giving glory and honour and thanks; the four-and-twenty elders crowned with gold, falling down and worshipping Him who sat on the Throne; the streets of gold, and the twelve gates, and the temple open in heaven, and in the temple the ark of the testament. "O God," prayed the minister, "take not my name from the book of life! Take not my name from the book of life, and I will serve thee forever and ever!"

Master Clement very truly worshipped the God whom he had seated on the throne, and was jealous for his honour and glory and solicitous for his praise among men, and would give life itself to bring all mankind under his Lord's supremacy. As little as any man-at-war of an earthly feudal suzerain would he have hesitated to compel them to come in. Was it not to their endless, boundless good, and without was there any other thing than hell eternal and everlasting and the evil lord? If, contumaciously, they would not come in, or if being in they rebelled and

broke from their allegiance, what else was to be done but to carry fire and sword — that is, to put into operation the laws of the land — against his Lord's enemies? Had any one called his attention to the fact of how largely liegemen like himself had brought these laws into being, he would have answered, Yes; under the direction of their Suzerain's own Word, writ down for their perpetual guidance, shortly after the making of the world!

It was not alone eager jealousy for his Lord s glory and honour, nor anxious care that he himself prove in no wise an idle and unprofitable servant, that was felt by Master Clement. To his intense zeal and his own cries for life eternal was added a thwart love of mankind — that portion of it enclosed in the great sheepfold, and that portion who, wandering outside, lost upon the mountain-sides in the cold and darkness, yet had in them no stubbornness, but would hasten to the fold so soon as they heard the shepherd's voice through the mist. He was eager for them, his brothers and children in the fold; eager, too, for the poor lost souls upon the mountains, — lost, yet not wilfully, stubbornly, and abandonedly lost, but capable of being found and regained, so many as were elected.

But the others, ah, the others! they who set up their own wills and professed other knowledge, or, if not knowledge, then doubt and scepticism of the liegeman's knowledge, writing a question mark beside that which was not to be questioned — they who

moved away from the fold in its completeness! Master Clement's zeal flared downward no less than upward, to the left no less than to the right. He hated with intensity — with the greater intensity that he was so sure his hatred was disinterested. "Have I not hated *Thy* enemies?" But if those without were manifestly rather than invisibly of the Kingdom of Satan, — if their ill-doing was so great that it became as it were *corporeal*, — if the people saw them open atheists, wizards, and witches, — if their foot had slipped or their master had been negligent to cover them with his mantle of darkness, — the soul of Master Clement experienced a grim and deadly exaltation. He tightened his belt, he saw that his axe was sharp, he went forth to hew the dead and poisoned wood out of the forest of the Lord.

In his small room he sat and read by his one candle — read those portions of the Old Testament and the New which he wished to read. Had a spirit queried his choice he would have answered, "Is it not all his Word? And are not these the indicated circumstances and this very passage the Answer and Direction?" When he had finished reading he knelt and prayed long and fervently. His prayer told his God who He was, his attributes, and what was his usual and expected conduct; it told Him who were his enemies and rehearsed the nature of the ill they would do Him; then changed to a vehement petition that if it was his will He

would discover his enemies and bring them to confusion — and if by means of the worm Thomas Clement —

He prayed in terrible earnest, his hands locking and unlocking, beads of sweat upon his brow, prayed for the better part of an hour. Finally he rose from his knees, and standing by the table read yet another passage, then paced the floor, then sat down, and, drawing forth the tablets upon which he had made his own notes of the examination that day, fell to studying them, the open book yet beside him.

He read over a list of questions with the answers Aderhold had given. He had not been quick to give the answers — he had fenced — he had striven to shift the ground — but at last, with a desperate quietness, he had given them.

Qu. Do you believe in God?

Ans. In my sense, yes. In your sense, no.

Qu. In God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

Ans. No.

Qu. Then you do not believe in the Trinity?

Ans. No.

There were other questions — a number of them — and the answers. But the very beginning was enough — enough. Master Clement, sitting rigidly, stared at the opposite wall. A sentence formed itself clearly before his eyes, the letters well made, of a red colour. Only the last of the three words wavered a little. CONVICTED AND HANGED. Or it might be CONVICTED AND BURNED. The

first two words stood steady, and above them the name, GILBERT ADERHOLD.

The concern was now to prove the sorcery — and to take all confederates in the net — to lop Satan in all his members.

The minister stared at the wall. Another name formed itself as though it were stained there — MOTHER SPURAWAY. . . .

Master Clement sat rigid, trying to place other names beside this one. It was his sincere belief that there were others. The probable diabolical activities at the Oak Grange — the coming to Hawthorn, after so long and godly an immunity, of the late sickness — the varied and mysterious happenings, losses, and attacks with which village and countryside were beginning to buzz — this final heinous Satan-revenge and attempt upon the godliest and most greatly promising young man of whom he had any knowledge — back again, and above all, to the blasphemer, the atheist, the idolater, and denier now fast in gaol! — Master Clement was firm in his belief that so frightful and important a round of occurrences pointed to many and prime agents of evil, though always that unbeliever yonder would prove the ringleader, the very lieutenant of Satan himself! Hawthorn made a narrow stage for such a determined and concentrated presence and effort on the part of the Prince of the Power of the Air. But Master Clement's was a narrow experience and a mind of one province. To him, truly, the stage seemed of

the widest, and the quarry worthy Apollyon's presence in person.

The atheist and sorcerer himself — Mother Spuraway — who else? The minister thought of old Dorothy at the Grange. There existed a presupposition of contamination. On the other hand, so far as he knew, there had never gone out a word against her; she had seemed a pious, harmless soul, trudging to church in all weathers. That in itself, though, the Devil was wont to use as a mask. Witness the atheist and sorcerer at church! Nay, was it not known that sometimes Satan came himself to listen and to confound, if he might, the preacher, making him tame and cold in his discourse; or razing from his memory that which he had carefully prepared; or putting into his mind, even while he preached, worldly and wicked and satiric thoughts; or during a sermon of so great power that all who heard should be lifted to the courts of heaven, stuffing the mind of the congregation with a like gallimaufrey?

The minister sat stiffly, staring at the wall. Dorothy's name did not form itself there before him, but neither did he wholly dismiss it from mind. He put it, as it were, on the wall at right angles, marked, "To be further thought on." Then what other name or names for the main wall? . . . Old Marget Primrose was dead. He thought of two or three old and solitary women, and of the son of one of the Grange tenants — a silent and company-shunning

youth who had gotten his letters somehow, and went dreaming through the woods with a book. Once Master Clement, meeting him by the stream-side, had taken his book from him and looking at it found it naught but idle verse; moreover, it seemed that it was Master Gilbert Aderhold's book, and that the youth went at times to the Grange for instruction. . . . All these, the boy with the itch for learning, and the two or three women he relegated to the wall with old Dorothy.

There was one other — there was Grace Maybank. She was not old, but Satan, though for occult reasons he oftenest signed them old, signed them young as well, and though he gave preferment to the ugly and the bent, would take good looks when they were at hand. Satan had already signed Grace in another department of the Kingdom of Evil-doing. The minister rose, and going to a press that stood in the room, took from it a book in which was entered, among other things, cases of church discipline. He found the page, the date several years back. *Grace Maybank, Fornicatress. Stood before the congregation, two Sundays in each month for three months in succession. Texts preached from on these Sundays, for the warning of sinners. . . .* And again, *Grace Maybank, her infant being born, stood with it in her arms before the congregation, Sunday, June the* ——.

Grace came into the probable class. Moreover — "Ha!" said the minister, recollection rising to the surface. He took from a second shelf a book of

record, made not by himself, but by his predecessor, the godly Master Thomson. It ran back twenty years and more. He found near the beginning of the book what he was looking for. *Ellice Maybank. Suspect of being a witch, and dragged through Hawthorn Pond. The said Ellice swam. Died of a fever before she could be brought to trial.*

"Ha!" said Master Clement; "it descends! it descends!" But he was a careful and scrupulous man, and so he put Grace's name only up on the probable wall.

It was growing late. A wind had arisen and moaned around the house. He went to the window and looked out at the church and the church yews. A waning moon hung in the east. The yews were black, the church was palely silvered; Master Clement regarded the church with eyes that softened, grew almost mild. The plain interior, the plain exterior, the hard stones, the tower lifting squarely and uncompromisingly toward the span of sky that was called the zenith — whatever of romance was in Master Clement's nature clung and centred itself here! Hawthorn Church was his beloved, it was his bride.

He stood by the window for some minutes, then turning began again to pace the room, and then once more to read in the Bible. It chanced now — his main readings that night having been concluded — that he had eyes for passages of a different timbre. He read words of old, firm wisdom, Oriental tender-

ness, mystic rapture, strainings toward unity—golden words that time would not willingly let slip. Many a soul, many a tradition, many a mind had left their mark in that book, and some were very beautiful, and the voices of some were music and long-lasting truth and carried like trumpets.

Master Clement read, and his soul mounted: only it mounted not to where it could overlook the earlier reading in the same Bible. It never came to a point where it could hold the two side by side and say, "Judge you which concept and which mind you will accept as brother to your own! For many minds have made this book." Master Clement read, and his soul lightened and lifted, but not so far as to change settled perspectives. Had he not read these passages a thousand times before? The names remained upon the wall, and when after a time he undressed and laid himself in bed, they stayed before him without a shadow of wavering until he slept. Indeed, he drowsed away upon the word CONVICTED—

Morning came. He rose at an ascetic's hour, dressed in a half-light, and ate his frugal breakfast while the day was yet at the dawn. The two women waited upon him; breakfast over, he read the Scriptures to them, and standing, prayed above their bowed heads. Later he went out into the hedged path between his house and the church and began his customary slow walking to and fro for morning exercise. The sun was coming up, a multitude of

birds sang in the ancient trees. Master Clement walked, small, arid, meagre, and upright, his hands at his sides, and presently, in his walking, caught sight of something white at the edge of the path. It proved to be a hand's-breadth of paper, kept in place by a pebble. He stooped and picked it up. On it was marked in rude letters, JOAN HERON. He turned it over — nothing on the other side, blank paper save for the name. He walked on with it in his hand. Twenty paces farther there was another piece of paper, held by another pebble, and a fair duplicate of the first — JOAN HERON. Well within the churchyard he found the third piece — JOAN HERON. ASK JOAN HERON WHO GAVE HER THE RUE THAT'S PLANTED IN HER GARDEN.

CHAPTER XVII

MOTHER SPURAWAY

MASTER CLEMENT, the papers in his hand, retraced his steps until he came to a bench set in the shadow of a yew that knotted the minister's house and garden to the churchyard. He sat down and spread the three out upon the wood beside him. It was the last-found scrap upon which, naturally, he concentrated attention. ASK JOAN HERON WHO GAVE HER THE RUE THAT'S PLANTED IN HER GARDEN. He sat with knitted brow and pursed lips, searching for a meaning. One was not there at first sight. He weighed the words. JOAN HERON — The daughter of old Heron that had died of the plague. He brought her before his mind's eye — a tall, grey-eyed girl sitting quietly in church. Save for that image she did not come into his mind with any force; he had, after all, no great knowledge of her. They were outlying people, the Herons, and then they had been away from Hawthorn. He was a man of the study and the pulpit and of crisises in the parish, rather than of any minute, loving, daily intercourse and knowledge; theologian rather than pastor. JOAN HERON. He would, however, presently think together any impressions or memories. Now little occurred further than that she

had been away with her father for years, living under the walls of the castle that was prelatical. In addition, he remembered that neither old Roger Heron nor this girl had ever brought to him spiritual problems to be solved. Many did bring them — cold, creeping doubts as to whether God really meant to save them or not. But the Herons had never done so. The fact, called to mind, just faintly darkened for him the name beneath his hand. He would make enquiries. — WHO GAVE HER THE RUE THAT'S PLANTED IN HER GARDEN.

Master Clement frowned. He had little taste for riddles and uncertainties and haunting suspensions of thought. Make a line distinct; colour matters plainly; if a thing were black, paint it in black! The words on the paper carried no meaning, or a foolish one. RUE. . . . Not long before he had been reading an account, set forth in a book, of a number of Satan's machinations, and of the devices, likings, and small personal habits of his sworn servants. A bit of this text suddenly sprang out before him, sitting there beneath the yew tree. "*For plants — hemlock, poppy, and mandrake, and, especially, the witches love, handle, and give to such as show inclination to become of their company, rue —*"

Master Clement slowly folded the three pieces of paper together, took out his pocketbook, and laid them in it. Grace Maybank was yet strongly in his mind, but now on the wall beside her name he put another name.

A little later, hatted and cloaked, he stepped into Hawthorn street. As he did so he looked northward and, seeing Squire Carthew riding in from Carthew House, stood and waited. The squire approached, gave good-morning, and dismounted. He nodded his head; ponderously energetic he had put already his engines into motion. The constable with helpers was gone at sunrise to take into custody Mother Spuraway, have her into the village, and thrust her into the room beneath the sexton's house that did for village gaol. To-morrow, after examination, and if proof of her evil-doing were forthcoming, she should be sent to town and quartered in the prison with the leech. Orders likewise had been given to the North-End Farm folk to bring into Hawthorn the afflicted boy. To confront the injurer with the injured, that was the best and approved way —

"How is Harry Carthew this morning?"

"Very fevered still. He talks strangely and paganly — about gods and goddesses and Love and the Furies and I know not what trash."

"Ah!" said Master Clement. "Were it devil or Gilbert Aderhold who struck him that night, be sure from the dagger would have run Satan's own venom, empoisoning the mind, bringing growth of nettles and darnel into the soul! The godly young man! I will pray — I will wrestle with God in prayer for Harry Carthew —"

From beyond the church there burst a small riot of sound. "They've got Mother Spuraway —"

The constable had his hand upon the old woman's arm and dragged her along, she being lame and stumbling. Behind them marched the constable's helpers, a self-constituted posse. Here was the father of the afflicted boy, and Lukin the carter, and a ditcher whose arm was palsied, and one or two others. A dozen boys brought up the rear. One had run ahead to cry to the village what was happening. Everybody was coming to door and window, out of doors, into the street. Voices buzzed and clacked. The witch fever was mounting, mounting, hardening the heart, confusing the head!

When Mother Spuraway saw the minister and the squire, for all she was as old and spare and feeble as a dried reed, she broke from the constable, and, running to them, fell upon her knees and raising her clasped hands began at once to protest her innocence and to beg for mercy.

The squire spoke to the North End farmer. "They're bringing your son in?"

"Aye, sir. His mother and sister and my son that's married and his wife and my niece and Humphrey Tanner. He's twisting fearful, and he sees the dog come day and come night!"

"Your worship, your worship!" cried the old woman on her knees. "I never could abide dogs — Is it likely I'd trouble a child? — Oh, Master Clement — "

The squire was speaking with the constable and the farmer, the whole company of witch-takers hearkening to him rather than to Mother Spuraway.

Had she not kept up a like babble clean from her own hut to Hawthorn? But the witch and straightening out the two walls were Master Clement's concern. Not always subtle, he was subtle when it came to playing the inquisitor. When the rôle fell to him, it was as though he had suddenly endued himself with a mantle that fitted. Had he lived in a Catholic country, had he been born and baptized there into an unquerying group, it is not unlikely that sooner or later he would have found employment in the Holy Office, unlikelier yet that he would not have served with zeal and a consciousness of high devoir done that King in heaven. In a vast range of relations starkly literal, he was capable when it came to theological detection, of keen and imaginative work. The churchyard yews somewhat cut off the village street; the small present crowd were attending to the squire. Master Clement put some questions. Mother Spuraway, who was now moaning and rocking herself, roused as best she could to answer. Associates? She had no associates. What, in God's name, should she have associates for? The leech? Well, the leech had taken her trade, that was all the association there —

"Ha!" said Master Clement. "The same trade! She hath said that far!"

Mother Spuraway looked at him and shrank affrighted. "My trade was to gather good herbs and make sick folk well. I meant that I was a leech as well as he."

"Leechcraft is not for women," answered Master Clement. "But leechcraft was not his main trade. His trade is in souls to Satan, his own soul and others. I fear me that thou art indentured to that same master and may well speak of this atheist and sorcerer as thy fellow trafficker! Tell me what others thou art concerned with —"

Mother Spuraway had an inward sturdiness, though age and weakness, fear and pain might yet betray it. "Concerned neither with him nor with others. Oh me! oh me! I've always stood on my own feet and harmed no one —"

"They that stand on their own feet and by their own strength," said the minister, "are naught. So they lean not upon Scripture and know that they are naught in themselves, but only by grace of another, they are already lost and have reached their hand to Satan. — Tell me if Grace Maybank be of thy company?"

"Grace Maybank!" Mother Spuraway's voice quavered and her frame seemed to shake. Perhaps there rose a memory of a love philtre or charm, or of Grace in trouble, coming secretly for counsel. But Mother Spuraway never took life. The child was born, was it not? — as merry and pretty a child as if it were not set apart and branded for life. Grace? It had been little that she had done for Grace! The charm had not worked; the man would not offer marriage, and so save Grace from what came upon her. Grace herself had come to the hut and bitterly

reviled her for a useless wise woman. Grace Maybank! She began to stammer and protest that she and Grace were strangers. — But Master Clement thought the most and the worst and the impossible. "Ha!" he said. "That window hath a light in it!" In his mind Grace's name left the one wall and came over to the other.

The squire made a movement from the constable, the constable a movement toward his prisoner. "Tell me," said Master Clement in a tense and low voice, — "tell me why you gave a bush of rue to Joan Heron?"

He had not known that she had done it. It had flashed upon him to make that move. Made, he saw that it was correct.

Mother Spuraway, dazed and shaken, put up her two hands as though to ward off blows that she knew not why were coming. "What harm," queried her thin old frightened voice, "in giving a body a sprig of rue? She had none in her garden."

"How did the rue come to you?"

"It was growing about the burned cot." For all her terror and misery Mother Spuraway felt a gust of anger. "O Jesus! What questions Master Clement asks!"

The constable came and took her by the arms. "On with you! Don't say that you can't walk, when we know that you can dance and fly!"

She broke again into a pitiful clamour. "I am no witch! — Satan's no friend nor master nor king

of mine — I know naught of the leech — I've put no spell on any one — Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen, think on the mother that bore you —" The constable and his helpers dragged her away. Her voice came back — "Think — think! How could I —"

In a little while the North-End Farm folk came into Hawthorn — Hawthorn quivering now with excitement. Every loss of a twelvemonth, every undeserved grief, every untoward happening, every petty mystery was awake and growing monstrous. The air was changing, the yew trees, the look of the houses, the loom to the west of Hawthorn Forest. . . . Today, to an observer, the church might look not greatly different from a palm-thatched or cedar roof over some sacred stone or carven god. Out of the deep veins, out of the elder world, old and gross superstition had been whistled up. It had not far to come; the elder world was close of kin. On the climbing road of the human mind the scenery of the lower slopes began to glow.

The sexton's house giving upon the green, Hawthorn could find pretext enough for gathering there in humming clusters. The sexton had a clean, bare room where at times charges were heard and prisoners brought up for examination from a cellar-like apartment below. On the whole, Justice Carthew preferred it to having poachers and vagrants, quarrellers, swearers and breakers of various commandments, petty officers, complainants, and witnesses trampling into Carthew House. Now as the warm

midday drew on, he entered, marshalled by the constable; with him, besides a young man half his son's tutor, half his own clerk, Master Clement, and a neighbour or two of fair consequence in the village and in Hawthorn Church. In the room already were the North-End Farm folk. The crowd pressed in behind, or, when no more were admitted, stood as close as might be without the door, left open for the air. Outside the one crazy window boys stood on heaped stones, their eyes a-row above the sill. The air seemed to beat and sound and pulse. No other kind of lawbreaking could so raise, so universalize, emotion. Other kinds were particular, affecting a few. But where sorcery and witchcraft, blasphemy and heresy, were arraigned, even though it were in a poor room and village like to this, there the universal enemy, there the personal foe of God Almighty, came into court! The personal foe of God was naturally the would-be murderer of every baptized soul alive — the unbaptized were his already. Nor did he stop at attempts against their souls; he did not hesitate to direct his engines against their bodies and their goods, to burn their ricks and barns, blast their fields, palsy their arms, lame their beasts, make their children peak and pine, wither the strength of men within them — If he had not yet harmed them to-day, he but waited for the chance to do so to-morrow! No man, woman, or child was safe, and the thing to be done was to destroy his instruments as fast as they were found.

The North-End Farm boy — an observer from the platform of a further age might have conjectured that it was partly a nervous disorder marked by hysteria, partly an impish satisfaction in the commotion produced and the attention received, partly an actual rejoicing in the workings of his own imagination together with a far past, early-man unawareness of any reason for forbearance — the North-End Farm boy cried out and writhed tormentedly.

They brought Mother Spuraway up the steep stair from the cellar and into the room, and making a clear space stood her before the boy for what should be judgement and doom. "The dog! the dog!" he cried, and writhed in the arms of the men behind him — "The dog!"

The room quivered and sucked in its breath. Now the magistrate, and now, at the magistrate's nod, the minister, questioned him. "You see the dog? — Where do you see it? — There? But something else is standing there! A woman is standing there. . . . Ha! Only the dog there, showing his teeth at you? Do you see no woman? . . . He sees no woman. He sees only the dog."

"The dog! the dog!" cried the boy. "The constable brought the dog in with him. . . . Oh, it wants to get at me! It's trying to shake the constable off! Oh, oh, don't let it!" And he writhed and twisted, half terrified and persuaded by the vividness of his own creation, deep down enjoying himself.

Commotion and hard breathing held in the room and outside about the door and window. "He sees her as she is when she's running with Satan! . . . Witch! . . . Witch! . . ."

Mother Spuraway fell again upon her knees, beat her hands together with passion. "It's not true — he's lying! — Oh, sirs, are you going to hang me for what a sick child says?"

North-End Farm raised an answering clamour. "Thou witch! 'T is thou that liest! Take thy spells off him!" The greater part of the room became vocal. "'T is not only that boy! — A many and a many things happening! — My arm, thou witch! I dug all day, and passed thee in the twilight, and next day 't was like this! — The corn so thin and burned! — The old witch! She made a sign above my wife's drink and she died and the babe died! — The witch! the witch! But she's not alone. . . . She and the leech. . . . Yes, but others than the leech. . . . There are folk here who can tell. . . . The plague — she brought the plague — she and the Devil and her fellows. . . . The pond! — Tie her thumb and toe and try her in the water —"

There came a surge forward. Mother Spuraway cowered and screamed. The squire might not object to the water trial in itself, but he objected and that strongly to any unruliness before Justice Carthew. The people were used to being cowed; his voice, bursting out against them, drove them back to a silence broken only by murmurs and intakes of the

breath. The North-End Farm boy continuing noisy, and crying out, his father and mother had leave to take him from the sexton's room and across to the ale-house. There was curiosity to see if the dog that was visible to him alone could follow. But no! At the door he cried out that it tried to spring after him, but could not pass the minister's chair. From the ale-house itself presently came back word that he was much comforted and quiet and said that Master Clement was keeping the dog from him.

Mother Spuraway sat on a bench, somewhat cut off from the rest of the room by the heavy chairs of the Law and the Church. She sat crouched together, for the most part silent, her white hair straggling from beneath her cap, her lip fallen, her meagre, bloodless hands with high-raised veins plucking at the stuff of her old worn kirtle. The day was warm. The squire, heated and thirsty, sent across for a tankard of ale. When it was brought, he drank, set the vessel down, and wiped his mouth. "And now," he said, "'t is to find if, in getting two, we get all the vipers in the nest—"

He did not think so himself; nor did Master Clement, nor did the throng of Hawthorn in the sexton's room and without, pressing about door and window. The whispers had been continuous. It was much to have put an arresting hand upon one witch, and beyond doubt she was a witch and a *vera causa!* But for more years than a few Hawthorn had looked somewhat askance at Mother Spuraway. She had

been among them for a long time, and these blackest happenings had not happened. Not in all these years the plague — never before at Hawthorn such a thing as the bold wounding of the squire's brother — never before so many accidents of one kind and another! For new activities new beings. . . . The leech, of course, proved beyond all seeming to be so fell and wicked a man! But not the leech alone. . . . The feeling, whatever it was, was increasing. There seemed something pent and thunderous, lying in wait for its chance. . . . There were those now in the crowd who had not been here earlier, who, having heard what was toward, had made their way in after the first. Some came from without the village. The tinker was plain to the front. Midway of the room might be seen Will the smith's son and his mother, and beside them Katherine Scott, the forester's wife. At the back, in company with the Lukins, stood Alison Inch.

The squire looked down at a piece of paper which he held in his hand. "Now what is this about a grey and white cat, and the burned cot in Hawthorn Wood?"

There rose a murmur, like wind over sedge. It grew in volume, and out of it came clear a woman's voice. "It's her familiar. He gave it to her. The boys saw him give it to her at the burned cot."

The squire lifted himself a little — looked over the crowd. "Who spoke there? Come forward here, you who spoke!"

A confusion; then Cecily Lukin was pushed to the front. She came protesting, her face flushed. "Oh, Your Honour, I did n't know I was speaking so loud! I never meant to say anything —"

"Nay, you *must* say," answered the squire. "He or she who keeps witness back will find trouble for their own part!"

"I said naught," said Cecily, "but that she had a grey and white cat which lay on the hearth or in the sun, and that once I did see it anger itself and grow larger than natural, and its eyes glowed like lanthorns and it went backward, rubbing itself against her skirt —"

"Mother Spuraway's skirt?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Cecily. "They say Mother Spuraway's imp is a green frog that lives in a stream by her door —"

A boy beside the tinker, nudged by the latter, opened his mouth. "Tom and Dick and Jarvis and I were playing in Hawthorn Forest by the burned cot. And a grey and white cat came out of the stones and climbed up in the plum tree and sat and looked at us, and we tried to drive it away, but we could n't. Then Master Aderhold came out of the woods and grew as tall as the plum tree and put up his arm, and the cat came and lay upon it. And there was Joan Heron standing in her grey dress, and she was as tall as he was, and he gave her the cat and she laid it along her shoulder, and they went away through the woods without their feet touching the ground —"

The forester's wife was an impatient dame. By this she had worked her way into the row nearest the justice and the minister, and now she raised her voice. "Your Honour and Maister Clement, I keep bees, and, Your Honour, they've not done well for a lang, lang time! They've not done well since, out of kindness, I took three hives frae folk that were gaeing visiting and put them with my ain. Those bees I took, I swear were not just bees! Times I thought as much while they harboured with my bees, and would do naught nor let my ain do aught — but I kenned it well when they were gone back to where they came frae! Your Honour and Maister Clement, I ha' gone by where those hives stand now and seen those bees come flying in with wings a span long and shining, and bodies daubed with gold and making a humming sound like a fiddle-string! And those visiting folk were not auld Mither Spuraway, though I doubt not she be a witch, too! — Those beehives are standing under the thatch of Heron's cottage!"

At sunset that evening Joan sat on her doorstep, her elbows upon her knees and her brow in her hands. The apple trees were in bloom, the heartsease was in bloom beside the well, red and gold cowslips brushed her shoe. The day had been warm, but the evening fell cool and rich. All day she had not gone from the cottage. She had seen none pass either; the road, the fields, the wood were as quiet

as though human life had fled from the earth. She sat with a heart oppressed, the world grown vague and monstrous. . . . The cottage, the garden, the fruit trees were wrapped in the afterglow. The birds were still; the last bee had come in from the flowers; somewhere in a marshy meadow, the frogs were beginning.

The grey and white cat came and rubbed itself against her. She lifted her head, and saw three or four men on the winding path between the forest road and Heron's cottage. As they came nearer she recognized first the tinker, but in a moment saw that the one at the head was the Hawthorn constable. Her heart stopped, then began to beat very heavily. As they came through the gate and up the little path she rose from the door-step.

"Good-day," said one of them.

"Good-day, neighbours."

The constable cleared his throat. He was a stolid, elderly man with many daughters and sons, and he opposed to the world a wooden, depthless face. "Probably you know," he said, "what we've come for?"

"No," said Joan: "what have you come for?"

The constable put out the staff that he carried and touched her on the shoulder. "In the King's name! You're to come with me for being a witch and working great harm to the King's good subjects — for laming and casting spells — for worshipping Satan at his sabbats at the burned cot and the fairy oak —

for plotting mischief with an infidel, blasphemer, and sorcerer —"

Joan stood motionless, her grey eyes clear, the blood not driven from her heart. She had seen the harm brewing, she had had her torture in watching the deep storm gather; now that it was rolling over her she grew suddenly steady. Though she knew it not she had always had strength and courage, but now she touched and drew from some great reservoir indeed. A wholesome anger helped her to it, an inner total rebellion and scorn, an amazed recognition of universal, incredible mistake and folly! Truly if men based life so crumblingly, on such a lie as this! . . . Sabbats at the burned cot and the fairy oak. . . . Plotting with — Something swept over her face, her frame seemed to grow taller in the flower-starred dusk by Heron's cottage.

The tinker was next to the constable. Now he spoke with an elfish grin and his foot trampling down the cowslip by the door. "Mistress Young Witch never thought, did she, that when Tom Tinker came up behind her, standing before the prison yonder, he saw well enough that she was making witch signs to one within? — Now the witch to the warlock—lemans must lodge under the same roof!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GAOL

ADERHOLD looked forth from a narrow grating, so high-placed that he must stand a-tiptoe like a child to see at all. Summer without, — summer, summer, and the winds of heaven! Within the gaol was summer close and stagnant. It was difficult for light and air to make their way into the space where he was kept. What could come came, but much was prevented by the walls and the intention with which they had been built. In that day, in a prison such as this, a noisy medley of people without freedom might be found in the dark and damp central passage and larger rooms or in the high-walled and dismal bit of court. All manner of crime and no-crime, soil, mistake, and innocence huddled there together, poisoning and being poisoned. Time and space received of their poison, carried it without these walls with at least as much ease as air and light came in, and distributed it with a blind face and an impartial hand.

But certain prisoners, those that people without the prison thought too poisonous or were willing vengefully to make suffer, were not allowed the hallway or the court or speech with fellow misery. These were put into small, twilight chambers or dungeons.

Aderhold paced twelve feet by six — twelve feet by six. He was shackled, a chain from ankle to ankle, another from wrist to wrist. But they were not heavy, and there was slack enough, so that one might walk and to some extent use the hands. Twelve feet by six — twelve feet by six. What light fell through the loophole window fell in one thin shaft of gold-dust. The walls were damp to the touch, and scratched over with names, ribaldry, and prayers. He himself, with a bit of pointed stone that he had found, was graving in Latin upon an unmarked breadth. Twelve by six — twelve by six — where the straw pallet was flung, not more than three feet clear.

He knew well how to avail himself of the escape of the mind and thereby to defeat the hours. He had no books, but memory and imagination were to him landscape and library, while the searching thought worked here as elsewhere. Memory and imagination could become his foes; Aderhold had known that from of old. Oftenest friends and great genii, but sometimes foes with mowing faces and stabbing, icy fingers. But strangely to him, in these days, no hostile side appeared; or if it came, it came in lessened strength; or if its strength was the same, then the opposing forces within him had themselves gathered power to overcome. It seemed to him that of late he had come to a turning; fear, shrinking, and dismay, that had often met him full course in life, often lurked for him at corners he

must pass, seemed now themselves somewhat shrunken and sinewless. He had known that there was further growth within him — oh, further, further! — and that some day he would turn and look them in the face and see them for the pygmies that they were. It seemed that the dawn of that day had been nearer than he knew. . . . Twelve feet by six — twelve feet by six — with as even and steady a pace as the irons would allow, and all the time to fancy that he walked free in Hawthorn Wood. Then, for a change, to draw himself up and see what might be seen through the slit of window. What might be seen was the topmost branch of a tree and a gargoyled angle of the great church tower, and above all a scimitar breadth of blue sky. From that to turn and grave at a letter upon the wall; then to walk again; then to rest upon the straw while the subtile body went free, passed like an emanation through the prison walls and wandered in foreign lands, and where there was neither land nor water underfoot. At times he took under consideration his own present predicament and earthly future. But the sting and terror were gone. That they were so he thanked his higher self, his widening, deepening, marching consciousness.

His present case. . . . There had been the examination immediately after his arrest and commitment to this gaol, the examination when he had admitted the apostasy and denied the sorcery. But that had been weeks ago, and since then naught.

Day after day in this dusk place, and only the turnkey had entered.

This gaoler was a battered, sometime soldier, red-faced and wry-mouthed. What romance had been in his life appeared to have come to him with the dykes and green levels and waters of the Low Countries. Chance leading him one day to the discovery that his prisoner knew Zutphen, Utrecht, and Amsterdam, he had henceforth, at each visit, plunged back for one short moment into the good old wars and renewed a lurid happiness. The reflex, striking upon Aderhold, lightened his lot as prisoner. The gaoler, after the first few days, exhibited toward him no personal brutality. Once he made, unexpectedly, the remark that he had seen good fighting done by all manner of people, and that the Devil must have some virtue in order to make so good a stand. But the gaoler's visits were of the briefest, and he was close-mouthed as to all things save the wars. If he knew when assizes would be, he chose not to impart it. One day only he had been communicative enough to speak of the commission named by the Privy Council. Who were the commissioners? He named the members from this side of the county — two or three of the clergy, several considerable country gentlemen. From the Hawthorn end Squire Carthew and his brother and Master Clement the minister. It had been at work, the commission, meeting and meeting and taking people up. The matter was become a big matter, making a noise through the

country. They said the King himself was interested. A bishop was coming—and the Witch Judge.

"The Witch Judge?"

"Aye, the Witch Judge."

But the gaoler would say no more — Aderhold was not sure that he knew much more. He left the cell, and at no other visit would he speak of anything but the Dutch and the good wars. . . . What he had said had left a sharp thorn of anxiety, — not for the prisoner's self. Aderhold knew perfectly well how palely hope gleamed upon Gilbert Aderhold. He would be done to death. But he knew also, from much observation, how they dragged the net so as to take in unallied forms. He tried to think of any at Hawthorn or thereabouts who might be endangered. He had been intimate with no one; none there had been confidant or disciple. How many that could save he had had occasion to note in France and Italy. Speech with such an one, acts of mere neighbourliness, the sheerest accidental crossing of paths — anything served for prosecution and ruin . . . In the lack of all knowledge he was chiefly anxious about old Dorothy and the boy her nephew, and the youth to whom he had given books. He never thought of Joan as being in peril.

Counting the days, he gathered that assizes could now be no great way off. Then would he hear and know, be judged and suffer. After that — continuance, persistence, being, yet and for ever, though he knew not the mode nor the manner of experience.

. . . The gold light lay across the cell like a fairy road. He turned upon his side, eased wrist and ankle as best he might, and with the chain across his breast fell half asleep. Ocean waves seemed to bear him up, a strong warm wind to blow upon him, birds to be flying toward him from some beautiful, friendly strand. . . .

The grating of the key roused him. It was not the gaoler's time of day, but he was here, red-faced and wry-mouthed.

Aderhold rose to his feet. "Are the Judges come?"

The gaoler shook his head. "No, no! They're trying highway thieves next county. You're to be lodged t' other side of gaol."

They went down a winding stair and through a dark and foul passageway, then from one general room to another. The place was here dusk and gloom, here patched with sunny light. It was well peopled with shapes despairing and complaining, or still and listless, or careless and noisy. The gaoler and Aderhold crossed a bit of court and came by a small door into a long and narrow room where again there were prisoners, men and women.

"Stand here," said the gaoler, "while I get an order." He moved away to a door in the wall.

The place was warm and dusk, save where from high windows there fell a broken and wavering light. There was a dull murmur as of droning bees. Sound, too, from the town square without floated in, —

summer sounds. A fugitive memory came to Aderhold. It was years ago, and a spring morning, and he was riding across the square with Will the serving-man, Master Hardwick behind in the litter, ahead on his great roan Harry Carthew. Upon the heels of that retracing came another. It was last winter again, and he stood on a doorstep not far from here, and ten feet away Sir Richard from the castle sat his horse and smelled at his silver box of spices. . . . He came back to the present hour. This place was long, like a corridor; it was curiously gold-brown and red-brown, like a rich painting for light and shadow. He looked across and, standing alone against the wall, he saw Joan Heron. . . . All noise stilled itself, all other shapes passed. It was as though there were spread around them the loneliest desert or sea-strand in all the world.

Joan stood straight against the wall. Her grey dress was torn, her grey eyes had shadows beneath them, she had no colour in cheek or lip, and she stood indomitable.

Aderhold put his hand before his eyes. "Mistress Friendly Soul," he said, "why are you here?"

"For somewhat the same reason," she answered, "that you are here. Because it is a crazed world."

"How long —?"

"A long time. . . . Nearly four weeks."

"Is it my misery to have brought you here?"

"No," said Joan, "cruelty and wrong brought me here."

"You are charged with —"

"Yes. With witchcraft."

The gaoler, returning, began furiously to grumble that he would have no speaking together, and urged Aderhold away. There was naught to do but to obey; he went, but at the door looked back. She was standing with her grey eyes and her sorrowful face set in scorn of this place and of the world. The door closed between them.

"No!" said the gaoler. "No questions, for I 'll not answer them. Say naught and pay naught! — Down this stair. You won't be so well lodged."

It mattered not greatly to Gilbert Aderhold how he was lodged. When the gaoler was gone and the grating key removed, and solitude with him in this dim place, he lay down upon the stone that made its flooring and hid his face. After a time, rising, he walked the dungeon where he was immured. He struck his shackled hands against the wall, pressed his forehead against the stone. . . .

The hours passed, the day passed, another night passed; another dawn came, strengthening outside into burning day. The gaoler appeared for a moment morning and evening, then darkness and silence. . . . He thought that he must be yet nearer the great church than he had been in his first cell. He could hear the bells, and they clanged more loudly here.

Aderhold, pacing the space not much longer or wider than a grave, heard in their ringing church bells far and near and deep in time. He heard them

ringing over Europe and from century to century. He heard the bells of a countryside that had rung when he was a child and had loved them well. He thought of the hosts who had loved the church bells, who loved them yet; of the sweetness and peace and musical memory they were to many — to very many; of the thousand associations, hovering like overtones, thoughts of old faces, old scenes, old gladnesses. He saw old, peaceful faces of men and women who had made their religion a religion of love and had loved the church bells. Waves of fragrant memories came to Aderhold himself — days of a serious, quiet childhood when he had pondered over Bible stories; when in some leafy garden corner, or on his bed at night, he had gone in imagination step by step through that drama of Judea, figuring himself as a boy who followed, as, maybe, a younger brother of the beloved John. It came back to him — as, indeed, it had never left him — the soft and bright and good, the pristine part, the Jesus part, the natural part. *Do unto others as thou wouldst have others do unto you — Love thy neighbour as thyself — I say unto you until seventy times seven times —*

The church bells! The church bells! But they had swung him here into this narrow place and dark, and they would swing him into a darker and a narrower. They had swung Joan Heron there where she stood against the wall. . . . The many and the many and the many they had rung and swung to

torture, infamy, and death! The church bells! They rang in the name of a gentle heart, but they rang also for the savage and poor guesses, the ferocities, the nomad imagination of an ancient, early people. They rang for Oriental ideas of despot and slave, thrones and princes, glittering reward of eternal, happy indolence, fearful punishment of eternal physical torment and ignominy! They rang head beneath the foot, and he that raiseth voice against this Order, not his body only, but his soul and his memory shall be flayed! . . . Palestine or England, what did it matter? Caiaphas or the Christian Church? . . . The searching, questing spirit that, age by age, lifted from the lower past toward the light of further knowledge, larger scope — and the past that, age by age, hurled its bolts and let its arrows fly and rang its iron bells against that spirit. . . . The bells rang and rang. He heard them sweet and softened across the years and knew that many loved them and held them holy; he heard them ring, jubilantly, above many a martyr's stake, massacre, war, and torture chamber, ring the knell of just questioning, ring the burial, for yet longer and yet longer, of the truth of things; and knew that many, and those not the least worthy, must abhor them. He had loved them, too, but to-day he loved them not. They clanged with a hoarse old sound of savage gong and drum and tube calling to the sacrifice. . . .

Between morning and midday the door opened and his red-faced, wry-mouthed friend of the Dutch

wars appeared. "Two of the commissioners would talk with you." They climbed the stairs leading from the darkness, and passed again through that long and narrow room. But though there were prisoners here, Joan Heron was not among them. The gaoler turned to the left and, opening a door, signed to him to enter a fair-sized, well-lighted room where were chairs and a table. The light dazzled him, coming from the almost night underfoot. When his vision cleared he saw that the two who awaited him were the minister of Hawthorn and Master Harry Carthew.

CHAPTER XIX

ADERHOLD AND CARTHEW

MASTER CLEMENT sat, tense and straight, spiritually girded to meet Satan and his legionaries. Harry Carthew was standing when Aderhold entered the room, but immediately he came and sat beside the minister, his eyes, deep-set in a pale, fever-wasted countenance, regarding, not unsteadily, the prisoner. He had risen from his bed but a week ago; this was the first time he had ridden to the town. There was something strange in his countenance, a look now vacillating, now fixed and hardened. He held his gloves in one hand and drew them through the other with a repeated motion.

"Give you good-day, Master Aderhold," he said in a controlled, toneless voice.

"Give you good-day, Master Carthew."

The minister's strong sing-song pierced the air. "Thou guilty and wretched man! We have left thee so long to hug thy own mind because there was much work elsewhere to do! To-day we would have thee bethink thyself. Thy sorcery at the Oak Grange and in Hawthorn Forest and elsewhere is wholly discovered! Thy fellows in iniquity are all taken, and sufficient have confessed to set thee at the stake! Why continue to deny—adding so to the

heat of that hell which awaits thee — thy doings in this nature? What use to say that thou didst not, leaving thy double in the constable's hands, return in the storm upon the Hawthorn road, and by the power of Satan affront and stay and with thy devil-furnished dagger wound Master Harry Carthew?"

"What use, indeed!" said Aderhold. "And yet I say it."

"Then," said Master Clement, and the veins upon his forehead began to swell, "thou art a foolish poor atheist! What! when thou art compact of denial, and will be lost from earth and heaven because of that, dost think that one denial more will serve thee? Come! Thou struckest the blow, we know. What witch had come at thy call and was with thee, standing on the hill brow, weaving and beckoning the storm?"

"What witch?" echoed Aderhold, startled. "Nor I was there nor any other!"

Harry Carthew had not ceased to draw the gloves held in one hand through the other. He sat with downcast eyes, wasted and sombre, more wasted, more haggard, and overlaid with the dull tint of tragedy than Aderhold himself. He spoke now with a flushed cheek. "Let that go by! It matters not what hand struck me in the side that night —" He turned on Aderhold. "That which I must know, and will know, I tell you —" Shaken by passion he pushed back his chair, and rising moved with a disordered step the length of the room.

Master Clement could not let pass the first part of his speech. "Not so, Harry Carthew! What! Matters not that you should be brought to death's door by the stroke of a wizard misbeliever — "

Carthew again approached the table. "It matters not, I say. Unless —" He stood looking fixedly at Aderhold, the breath coming quickly from between his lips. "It has been confessed that you met these witches and wantoned with them at the sabbats in Hawthorn Wood. . . . Now, I have been sick and my senses wandering, and I have come but lately back into this enquiry. Much has happened — much has been done — much has been laid bare that I knew naught of. In particular —" He broke away, walked again the length of the room; then returning, stood above Master Clement in his great chair and urged some course in an undertone.

Master Clement first demurred, then, though without alacrity, acquiesced. "Is it well for you to be alone with him? I tell you the Devil hath such wiles — But since you wish it, I will go — I will go for a short while." He heaved his slight, black figure from the chair, and, moving stiffly, quitted the room. The gaoler stood yet at the door, but, at a sign from Carthew, without, not within, the room.

The squire's brother had his own strength. It exhibited itself now. He stilled his hurried breathing, ceased the nervous motion of his hands, indefinably broadened and heightened his frame, and became the strong, Puritan country gentleman, the

future officer of Ironsides. Whatever there was in him of stanch and firm and good so struggled with what was darkly passionate that, for these minutes at least, there rose on the horizon something that was not the tempest-tossed ship of many months. The masts seemed to cease to bend, the anchor to hold again.

He stood within five feet of Aderhold. He had moved so that the table was no longer between them. In doing so, the attitude of advantage and mastership had been lost. The two stood on a level floor, with no conventional judgement bar between them. If in Carthew, beneath murk and tempest, there appeared for the moment something basic, justified, and ultimate, in Aderhold no less character unveiled its mass. He stood in chains, but they seemed ribbons of mist. It was he that was metal and real, and with a sudden loom and resistive force sent back, broken, doubts and fantastic violences of thought and ascription. Though for a short time only, yet for that time, the tattered farrago of superstitions, hanging in Carthew's mind like mouldering banners of wars whose very reason was forgot, shrunk and shrivelled until they seemed but featureless dust. For a time he ceased, standing here, to believe in Aderhold's attendance at sabbats, brewings of poison from baleful herbs, toads, spiders, and newts, and midnight conspirings in the interests of the Kingdom of Satan. Even the acknowledged, monstrous sin, the extravagant, the unpardonable,

the monarch and includer of all — even the enormity of Unbelief — wavered in his mind, grew unsubstantial. There was a fact of great force before him, a mass, a reality . . . But if, for one larger, saner moment, he rejected belief in a supernatural bond of evil linking together Aderhold and Joan Heron, he by no means did this with the possibility of other bonds — evil also if they existed between these two — evil to him as wormwood, darkness, and madness!

"In particular," he said, in a voice that thickened as he went on, "I am told that they have taken Joan Heron. I had never thought of that — of her coming under suspicion . . . I had never thought of that. I do not yet believe her to be a witch — though indeed they bring all manner of accusation and proof against her — but I will not yet believe it . . . But I will have from thee what has been thy power over her! Tell me that, thou atheist!"

"My power over her has been naught and is naught. I have spoken with her seldomer than I have spoken with you. I have had no association with her. Why she should be in this gaol I know not."

"It is proved that the morning after you were lodged here she came into this square, and stood before this prison, making signs."

"I know naught of that. What does she say herself?"

"She says that she had walked to the castle to see

one there, and coming back, paused but a moment in the square. She says she made no signs."

"And is it so hard to believe what she says?"

Carthew drew a heavy and struggling breath. "There is a passion, I think, that teacheth all human beings to lie. . . . It is said, and loudly, that you came to Heron's cottage by night, and that she went to the Oak Grange by night, and that you were paramours."

"It is false. I neither went so to Heron's cottage nor did she come so to the Grange, nor were we paramours."

"That day I found you together in Hawthorn Wood —"

"Do you remember what I said to you? That was the truth."

"Not one hour afterward I was told that often — oh, often and often! — you walked together in the forest."

"Then you were falsely told. It was not so."

"Was the truth — and 'is' the truth. — You are earnest to clear her from every shadow of association with you. Why?"

"Why?" Aderhold's eyelids flickered. "Why? It seems to me easy to know why. I was not born of so low condition that I would see the innocent dragged to a place like this."

A moment's dead silence; then Carthew spoke with a regathered and dangerous passion. "Others are here — dragged here for their own sinful activi-

ties, and accused likewise of being your hail fellows and boon companions. There are here a youth to whom it is said you taught atheism, and Mother Spuraway and Grace Maybank and your housekeeper at the Grange and others. Do you grieve for them that they are here?"

"Aye," said Aderhold; "I grieve for them. Piteous, wronged souls! I tell you, I have had naught to do with them, nor they with me!"

Carthew's voice quivered, and he struck one hand into the other. "Words are locked doors, but not the voice with which the words are uttered! 'Piteous wronged souls' that my gentleman born of no low condition feels grief for and would deliver if he might from gaol and judgement — and Joan Heron whom his voice only trembles not before, only caresses not because he would guard her from the ruin of his favour! — What good to loom there against me and thrust that, too, from you? You love her! You love her! And now I will know if she loves you! And when I know that I will know what I shall do!"

"You are mad! Her life and mine touch not, save as this Hawthorn music jangles our names together! I shall presently be dead. I know it, and you know it. Leave her living, her and these others! You have the power. Leave them living!"

"Power!" the other burst forth. "I have no power to save her. She is bound with a hundred cords! Had I not fallen ill I might have — or I might have not — But now it is too late. I can-

not!" His helplessness was real enough, and it made — if he would not feel it too crushingly — a dark bubbling-up of heat, violence, murky and passionate substance a necessity to him. He gave it way.

Aderhold saw the change, the resurgence. He made with his chained hands a stately and mournful gesture. "As it will be!" he said.

The other burst forth. "Aye, I believe — I believe that you have poisoned and corrupted her, and that there is truth in every word they say! Now as I am a baptised man there is truth! For you are an unbeliever and God's enemy! And is not God's enemy of necessity black and corrupt and a liar to the last particle of his being, to the last hair of his head, to the paring of his nails! More — you have stood there weaving a spell to make me listen and well-nigh believe! Well, your spell will not hold me! — As God liveth I hold it to be true that you met by night in Hawthorn Forest —"

"Look at me!" said Aderhold. "That is as true as that it was I who struck a dagger into you on a Sunday night! *Now* you know how true it is!"

Carthew gave back a step and went deadly white. There was within him that root of grace that he had risen from his sick bed with his first madness lessened and his mind set on managing a correction in the minds alike of Hawthorn and the commission. In the first wild turmoil and anger, pushing home under the half-moon from Heron's cottage, blood staining his doublet and his head beginning to swim,

he had seized — it coming to him upon some blast of the wind that he must find and presently give a reason for his condition — he had seized the first dark inspiration. It had answered — he had found on stepping from weeks of stupor and delirium that it had answered so well and thoroughly that now — always below the Unbelief and Blasphemy — it was one of the main counts against the physician. He had thought to be able to cast hesitancy and doubt on his original assertion. It was dark — the figure was cloaked — it might not have been the leech. . . . He found that he could corrupt no one's belief that it was the leech — Hawthorn, his brother, Master Clement, the commission, all were unshakable. He knew not himself how to shatter their conviction. He could not so injure his own name and fame, the strict religion, the coming England, the great services which he meant yet to perform, as to stand and say, "I lied." He could see that even if he said it, he would not be believed. They would say, "Your fever still confuses your head." Or they might say, "They are casting their spells still." Or they might ask, "Who, then, struck you?" . . . It was impossible. . . . Even did they believe it, what would it alter? Nothing! The apostate and sorcerer was in any event doomed. A straw more or less would make no difference. Surely one out of the circle of God's mercy need not be too closely considered. . . . But he paled with the issue thrown so by the man himself between them.

He paled; then desperately opened the gates to anger the restorative, and jealousy that shredded shame to the winds. Moreover, there flashed into his soul in storm a suspicion. "Who struck me? Knowest thou *that?* If thou knowest that, then, indeed —"

But Aderhold knew not that. He stood with folded arms and a steady face. It was now to summon the ancient virtue, to play truly the Republican, the free man, now to summon courage for others. Life! Life! And what men and women had suffered would be suffered again. And still the ether sprang clear and time stretched endlessly, and what was lost here might be found there. He looked at Harry Carthew with a steadfast face, and reckoned that the younger man was unhappier than he.

The door opened with a heavy sound and Master Clement reappeared. Carthew flung himself toward him, his face distorted. "Naught — naught! And now I think the worst — I tell you I think the worst —"

"I have always thought the worst," said Master Clement. "Send him hence now, and let us see these others."

. . . Aderhold moved before the red-faced, wry-mouthed gaoler through the dark passageway and down the stair, back to the chill and darkness of his dungeon. Within it, the gaoler made a moment's pause before he should turn and, departing, shut the thick door with the sound of a falling slab of a

sepulchre. He stood, to the eye a rude and portentous figure, but to the inward vision giving off at times relieving glints.

"Everything goes," he said in a deep and rusty voice, "by looking at more than just itself. In another day in England or in another country to-day, you'd have been racked or put to the scarpines till, when they wanted you, we'd have had to carry you!"

"That's true enough," said Aderhold. "One should have a grateful heart! . . . True enough — as I know — as I know!"

"It's ten days to assizes," said the gaoler. "It is n't lawful to put folk to the question in England — though if you stand mute, there's *peine forte et dure* — and of course nobody's going to do anything that is n't lawful! But you know yourself there are ways —"

"Yes," said Aderhold. "Do you mean that they will be used?"

But the gaoler grew surly again. "I don't know anything except that they want your confession. They've got a story that's going to be sold in chapbooks all over England — and ballads made — and of course they want all the strange things in. It's like the pictures of George and the Dragon — the more dreadful the dragon, the taller man is the George! The town's all abuzz — with the King writing a learned letter, and the bishop coming and the Witch Judge. — They want a dreadful dragon and the tallest kind of George!"

"I see," said Aderhold. "Even the dragon, the spear at his throat, expected to flatter! — O Diogenes! let us laugh, if we die for it!"

"Anan?" said the gaoler. "Well, it stands that way."

The door shut behind him, grating and heavy. That it stood that way Aderhold found in the days that followed. . . .

It drew toward assizes. Five days before the time he found himself one late afternoon, after a weary, weary hour of facing the commission, again in the long, dusky prison room where he had seen Joan. He knew now that it was a kind of antechamber, a place where prisoners were drawn together to wait occasions. More than once during these last days he had been kept here for minutes at a time, and sometimes others had been here and sometimes not. But Joan Heron never. One day he had seen Dorothy, and in passing had managed a moment's word. "Dorothy, Dorothy! I am sorry —" Dorothy had gasped and shrunk aside. "Oh, wicked man! Oh, Master Aderhold —" He had seen also the youth with a clear passion for knowledge to whom he had lent books and talked of Copernicus and Galileo. This one had not been fearful of him.

To-day he saw neither this youth nor Dorothy. But suddenly, as he stood waiting his gaoler's leisure, he was aware of Joan Heron. . . . From somewhere came a red sunset light, and it followed and enwrapped her as she moved. She was moving with

her arm in the grasp of a man of a curious and sinister look — moving by the wall at the end of the room — moving across, then back again, across again and back, across and back. . . . Aderhold drew near, and it was as though an iron hand closed hard upon and wrung his heart.

Joan went very slowly, dragging her limbs, more haled by the man than moving of volition. Her form swayed, seemed as if all and only its desire was to sink together, fall upon the earth and lie there with time and motion ended in one stroke. Her head was sunken forward, her eyes closed.

The man shook her savagely. "No sleeping! — When you are willing to tell your witch deeds, then you shall sleep!"

"Joan! Joan!" cried Aderhold. He moved beside the two. The man looked at him but, stupid or curious, neither thrust him off nor dragged his charge away. It was but for a moment.

Joan opened her eyes. "You?" she said. "All I want is to sleep, sleep —"

Her face was ghastly, exhausted. Aderhold uttered a groan. "Do they not let you sleep either?" she said. "Five days, five nights — and I am thirsty, too."

He managed to touch her hand. "Joan, Joan —"

She looked at him with lustreless eyes. "The others have all made up something to confess. But though I die, I will not. They may twist a cord around my head and I will not." A spasm crossed

her face. "Of their vileness they may set the witch-pricker on me and I will not." Her voice, monotonous and low, died away. The man haled her by the arm, forcing her to walk. She reeled against him. "Sleep . . . sleep. Oh, let me sleep!" A door opened. The man with her looked up, nodded, put his hands on both her shoulders and pushed her toward it. Her eyes closed again, her head sank forward. Together the two vanished, leaving to Aderhold a sense of midnight and the abyss.

nesses and sufferers, fresh numbers of these being continually discovered. Now the hall held its breath while a witness was being questioned, or the counsel for the Crown spoke, or the Witch Judge thundered, and now it buzzed and hummed like the bees that they said were bewitched. Heat, many bodies in contact and a mist of breaths, an old, old contagion of opinion old as savagery . . .

The Witch Judge was to most a fearful delight. No silent, listening, seldom-speaking judge was he! He had a voice like rolling thunder and an animus against just those wrongs judgement upon which had swelled his reputation. He overbore; he thundered in where Jove would have left matters to lesser divinities; he questioned, answered, tried, and judged. He loved to hear his own voice and took and made occasions. Nor would he hasten to the end, but preferred to draw matters out in long reverberations. He was prepared to give a week, if need be, to this trial which was concluded ere he took his seat. In all, in the Hawthorn matter, there were eight folk to be tried. Destroy one, destroy all, principal and accessories, the whole hung together! But he was prepared with devices and flourishes, and for each soul on trial specific attention and cat- and-mouse play, for the Witch Judge loved to show his variousness. . . . The practice of the age was everywhere elastic enough, but in no trials so licensed as in such as this. What need for scruples when you dealt with Satan? . . . No counsel was allowed the pris-

oners. If ever there was floating in the air a notion that the judge should be counsel for prisoners, guarding them from injustice and oppression, it had made no lodgement in this judge's ear.

The writ *de hæretico comburendo!* The Witch Judge thundered forth the text of it, then preached his sermon. This wretched man, this wicked leech, this miscreant, blasphemer, and infidel had made confession of his crime of apostasy — the most enormous under heaven — confessing it without tears, shame, or penitence! Confessing! nay, avowing, upholding — The Witch Judge glowed fuliginous; his voice of horror seemed to come from the caverns of the earth. "He denieth the actuality of the Holy Trinity — he saith that the world was not made in six days and is not composed and constructed as set forth in the Holy Scriptures — he refuseth to believe in the remission of sins by the shedding of blood — No language nor tongues," cried the Witch Judge, "can set forth the enormity of his error, sin, and crime! Let him burn, as God saith he will burn, through eternity and back again!" The phrase caught the fancy of the throng. It came back in a deep and satisfied murmur. *Through eternity and back again.*

On crackled and roared the Witch Judge's thunder. Convict by manifold testimony and impeccable witnesses, and wholly and terminably convict by his own confession without violence, it remained — the authority of Holy Religion and the Ecclesiastical

Court being present in the person of my Lord Bishop — it remained but to give judgement and pass sentence upon the apostate! In regard to his apostasy. But this wicked leech rested also under a charge of sorcery — sorcery of the blackest — sorcery which he obdurately denied! Let him, then, before judgement given, be tried for his sorcery — he with these wretched others, for Satan hunteth not with one beagle, but with many!

The Witch Judge half rose, puffed himself forth, became more than ever a bolt-darting Jupiter. Trials for heresy, apostasy, blasphemy were not in themselves wholly his element. But let them darken and lower — as indeed, they almost always did darken and lower — into questions of actual physical contact and trade dealings with the Hereditary Foe, then he was in his element! . . . Wizards and witches! The Witch Judge shook his hand above the prisoners. "And let not any think Witchcraft to be other or less than Apostasy, Idolatry, and Blasphemy! If Apostasy is the Devil's right hand, Witchcraft makes his left — his left? Nay, his right and most powerful, for here is your apostate in action — here is your unbeliever upon his Lord Satan's business!" Witchcraft! Witchcraft! The Witch Judge paced around, threw lurid lights upon the crime he battened on. His tribute of huge words rolled beneath the groined roof and shook the hearts of the fearful. There came back from the crowd a sighing and muttering, half-ecstatic, half-terrified, low sound. The word of God

— the command of the Most High, taken from his own lips — the plainest order of the King of Kings. — *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.* . . . Statute of the first year of our present Gracious Sovereign, our lord, King James — *All persons invoking any evil spirit, or consulting, covenanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding, or rewarding any evil spirit, or taking up dead bodies from their graves to be used in any witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment, or killing or otherwise hurting any person by such infernal arts, are declared guilty of felony without benefit of clergy and shall suffer death.* He had a way of uttering "death" that made the word a distillation of all the suffering man could make for man.

Preliminary thunders from the Witch Judge ceased. Counsel for the Crown came afterwards like a whistling wind. The long Hawthorn Witch Trial began, and stretched from midsummer day to day. To many it afforded an exciting, day-by-day renewed entertainment; to some it was a fearful dream; to a very few, perhaps, it seemed a long, dull, painful watch by mortality's fever bed. Once Aderhold caught the gaze of the earl's kinsman upon him. The eyes of the two met and agreed as to what was passing, then Aderhold looked away.

The prisoners had their appointed space. At times they were all brought together here; at times the greater number were withdrawn, leaving one or two to be examined separately or together. The heat and the light struck against them, and the waves of

sound; from one side came the booming of the judge's voice or the dry shrilling of the king's lawyer; from the other the whisper of the crowd that meant to have witch blood. There were Aderhold, the youth to whom he had given books, the boy of sixteen, old Dorothy's nephew, Dorothy herself, a half-witted woman from a hut between the Grange and the North-End Farm, Grace Maybank, Mother Spuraway, and Joan Heron — eight in all.

Mother Spuraway — Now torture was not allowed in England, though on the Continent and in Scotland it flared in witch trials to its fullest height. Mother Spuraway, therefore, had not been tortured — no more than Aderhold, no more than Joan, no more than others. But it was allowable, where confession did not come easily, to hasten it with fasting from bread, water, and sleep — all these being withholdings, not inflictings. There might be, too, insistent, long-continued questionings and threats and a multitude of small gins and snares. Mother Spuraway had been long weeks in gaol, and she was old and her faculties, once good, were perhaps not now hard to break down. At any rate, she had a ghastly look and a broken. Since she trembled so that she could not stand, they put her into a chair.

"Now answer strictly the questions asked you, if you have any hope of mercy!"

Mother Spuraway put her two trembling hands to her head. "Mercy? Yes, sirs, that is what I want. Mercy."

"Very well, then! Look on this man and tell us what you know of him."

The clerks' pens began to scratch.

Mother Spuraway's gaze was so wandering that while it came across Aderhold, it went on at once to a cobweb above the judge's chair. "He is the Devil," she said.

"You mean the Devil's servant."

"Yes — oh, yes! Devil's servant. I mean just what Your Honours want."

The Witch Judge thundered at her. "Woman! it is not what *we* want. You are to speak the truth. Truth-speaking is what we want."

Mother Spuraway's head nodded, her eyes fallen now from the cobweb to the judge's robe. "Yes, sirs — yes, sirs. You shall have what you want. Oh, yes, sirs!"

"She asserts," said the counsel for the Crown, "that she tells the truth. — You were used to going to sabbats with this man?"

"Yes, sirs, — sabbats, sabbats, sabbats, sabbats —"

"Give her wine," said the Witch Judge. "She is old. Let her rally herself. Give her wine."

A gaoler set a cup to her lips and she drank. "Now," said the Crown, "tell us of these sabbats — circumstantially."

Mother Spuraway, revived by the wine, looked from floor to roof and roof to floor and at the commission and the Witch Judge and the bishop, and at

the motes in a broken shaft of light. "We danced about the burned cot — all taking hands — so! Sometimes of dark nights we went *widdershins* around Hawthorn Church — sometimes it was around the fairy oak at the Oak Grange. Sometimes we danced and sometimes we flew. We rode in the air. I had an oaken horse — and Grace had an elmen horse and Dorothy had a willow horse, and Elspeth No-Wit had a beechen horse, and Marget Primrose had a horse of yew —"

There was a movement among the commission. "Marget Primrose," exclaimed Squire Carthew, "died years ago!"

"She came back. Marget had a yew horse — and I had an oaken horse — and there were other horses, but I never learned their names. And there were green men —"

"Was this man in green?"

"No, no! He had on a doctor's cloak. Sometimes he fiddled for us when Satan grew tired."

"Then he was a chief among you?"

"Yes, yes, a chief among us. — Sometimes we changed to bats and mice and harmless green frogs and hares and owls and other creatures —"

"You did that when you were about to go to folk's houses or fields to injure them?"

"Yes, sirs, yes, yes — about to injure them. Then I was a dog, and Grace a little brown hare, and Dorothy a great frog, and Elspeth No-Wit a bat, and Marget Primrose — And we brewed poisons and

charms in a great cauldron inside the burned cot, but at the fairy oak we made little figures out of river clay and stuck them full of pins. And there we had a feast —"

"And this man?"

"He sat on the green hillock beside Satan, and Satan had a black book. He gave it to him to read in while we were dancing and eating and daffing with the green men — and then the cock crew and we all flew home."

"There were many sabbats?"

"Oh, yes, many!"

"And this man was always among you?"

"Yes, always among us."

"You say he read in a black book. But he likewise danced and wantoned as did the green men?"

"Yes, yes! The pretty green men."

"Be careful now. With whom especially did he work this iniquity. Whom did he single out at each sabbat?"

"Whom? — I do not know whom. . . . Sabbats? There are no such things. Who would leave home at night to wander round oak trees and burned cots? — Oh, home, home! Oh, my hut! I want to see my hut!" cried Mother Spuraway. "Oh, good gentlemen! Oh, Your Worships! Oh, Squire Carthew — Master Clement! — Won't you let me go home? A poor old woman that never harmed a soul —"

The Witch Judge's voice came thundering down. "Her mind is wandering! — Thou wretched woman!

Dost wish to be taken back to thy prison, and urged anew to confess?"

But apparently Mother Spuraway did not wish that. She put up her two hands and said, "No, no!" — then, shrunken and shuddering, begged for more wine. They gave it to her. . . . "Now, whom did this sorcerer take in his arms? Was it the *maiden* of your company?"

"Yes, oh, yes! The maiden."

"The maiden of your company was Joan Heron?"

"Yes, Joan Heron."

The shafts of light were shortening, the earth wheeling toward sunset. Without clanged the bells of the great church — it was late afternoon. The people who had far to walk, though loath for the entertainment to cease, yet approved when the court rose for that day. Morning would not be long, and they purposed returning most early in order that good places might be got. The hall and the square without seethed and sounded with the dispersing crowd.

Near at hand was the prison, its black mass facing the great square, the pillory in its shadow; beyond, slanting down to the river, the field where they raised the gallows. The prisoners when they were removed were taken, guarded, along by the wall, into the dark, gaping prison mouth.

Joan walked beside Mother Spuraway. In the last three or four days the hand of withholding had been lifted from the prisoners so that they might get

their strength. . . . Joan walked with a colourless, thin cheek and shadowed eyes, but walked steadily. But Mother Spuraway could not drag her limbs across the stones; a gaoler held her roughly up with a force that drew a moan. Presently, his grasp relaxing, she stumbled again and fell. Joan stooped and raised her, then with her arm about her bore her on. "Thank'ee, my pretty maid," said Mother Spuraway. "I'll do as much for you when you are old!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE WITCH

THE morrow came and went in heat and tenseness and excitement. The third day arrived and passed with no lessening. The fourth day came and the fever ran more high than before. The Crown, the jury, and the Witch Judge, the throng nodding approval, had now checked off Mother Spuraway, Grace Maybank, Dorothy and her nephew, Elspeth No-Wit, and the youth. It remained on this day to concentrate upon and finally dash to earth the main sorcerer and that one who patently had been his paramour and adjutant — the "maiden" of the wicked crew. There were many witnesses and much wild testimony. Small facts were puffed out to become monstrous symbols. Where facts failed, the inflamed and morbid imagination invented. It was strange hearing to the two who had dwelled at the Oak Grange and Heron's cottage. . . .

They questioned Elspeth No-Wit. "You had a meeting the night before the leech was taken?"

Elspeth laughed and nodded.

"What did you do there?"

"We had a big kettle and a great fire. Everybody dropped what she loved best in the kettle. We played and clapped hands and jumped as high as

the tree-tops. When we clapped our hands, it thundered, and when we ran around the kettle the wind blew our clothes away."

"You were brewing the storm that broke next day?"

"Oh, aye!"

"The leech and Joan Heron were with you?"

Elspeth twisted her body and peered around. "Is that Joan Heron and is that the leech? They ran round thrice to our once, and they kissed the closest, and at last they wandered away."

Will the smith's son was called. "You stopped at Heron's cottage that Sunday evening?"

Will stammered, looking wild, hollow-eyed, and awed. "Aye, I did, please Your Honour! — But I never would have stopped but that it was storming so. — My mother was with me, please you, sir."

"No one means you any ill. — It was dark under the clouds without, but there was a light inside the cottage — a red light?"

"Yes, sir; bright like firelight."

"Hardly, I think, true firelight: a red and strange light. — It was well after the hour when the leech had been taken from this Oak Grange?"

"Aye, Your Honour. 'T was close to dark."

"With the constable and his men, and Master Carthew riding a part of the way, he must then have been upon the Hawthorn road, his face set to this gaol?"

"He must have been so, sir, but —"

"We are coming to that. It is a fact, is it not, that witches and warlocks are able to transport themselves, with their master Satan's aid, through the air — and that so swiftly that you cannot see their flight?"

"Oh, yes, Your Honour," said Will. "They fly in sieves, and sometimes they steal bats' wings."

"Very well. Now you and your mother opened this cottage gate and went up the path to the door, and to reach that you had to pass the window. As you did that, passing close, you naturally put forehead to the frame, and looked within, and the place being filled with that red light —"

"It was n't very bright," said Will. "It was like a faggot had parted on the hearth, and there was now a dancing light, and now it was dark. There was nothing clear, and we heard naught because it was lightning and thundering —"

"And you saw —"

Will moistened his lips. "Yes, sir. — She and a black man were together — yes, please Your Honour, standing locked together —"

"The black man was the leech?"

"We did n't know it, then, sir — How could we," said Will, "when he was three miles the other side of Hawthorn with a guard? But I know it now. It was the leech. —And mother and I went on and knocked at the door, and she opened it — and there was nobody there but Joan — Joan and the grey and white cat.'"

"You stayed no time in that cottage?'

"No, sir, please Your Honour. There was that that frightened us."

Will the smith's son was motioned down. They set Mother Spuraway again in the eye of the court—Mother Spuraway, wrecked until she was nigh of the fellowship of Elspeth No-Wit. "You have told us that on this Sunday evening you were running in the shape of a hare through field and copse by the Hawthorn road. We have obtained from you that you saw the leech part from his natural body, having by black magic so blinded the guard that they went on bearing with them but a shadow, a double, and yet unsuspecting that cheat. Now tell us what the sorcerer did."

Mother Spuraway plucked at the stuff of her kirtle. "He mounted in the air. — Storm — storm — break storm!"

"He went toward Hawthorn Wood?"

"Yes, oh, yes! Hawthorn Wood. . . . Rue around the burned cot."

"That is, toward Heron's cottage. — A time passed, and you, crouching then in the hazels by the road, saw him returning. — Now, mark! Was there a horseman upon this same Hawthorn road?"

Mother Spuraway tried to mark, but her mind was wandering again. She preferred, it seemed, to talk of when she was a young woman and Spuraway and she had wandered, hand in hand, in Hawthorn Wood. But one wrenched her arm, and said some-

thing in her ear and brought her back with a shiver. "'Horseman'? Oh, aye, Your Worships! A great, noble horseman."

"You saw the leech coming across the fields from the direction of Heron's cottage, and you saw this horseman riding through the storm toward Hawthorn Village. What then?"

"I ran under the earth," said Mother Spuraway. "For I was now a pretty black mole, dressed all in velvet and blind — blind — blind — blind —"

It was with a different — oh, a different, different tone that they questioned Master Harry Carthew and harkened solicitously to what he had to tell. All the crowded place leaned forward and listened, in the hot, slanted gold of the fourth afternoon. . . . Joan saw them all, and saw into their minds prone before the foreknown truth of whatever Master Carthew was about to recount. She sat like carven marble and viewed and knew the world she viewed. She saw Alison and Cecily, Will and his mother, Goodman Cole, the forester's wife, Lukin the carter, the tinker, many others. She saw Master Clement and all the clergy and gentry of the commission, the court, the spectators. She saw the Witch Judge who was going to hang her. And townspeople with whom she had had acquaintance. . . . The vintner who had wished to marry her was here, pale and of a tremendous inward thankfulness. And servants from the castle, and the new huntsman. . . . All here to see her hunted — her and the

others. She felt their tongues go over their lips, and the warm indrawing of their shoulders and nursing of their elbows — felt and cared not.

Carthew was speaking in a hollow, short, determined voice. If a black lava torrent of passion and madness was devastating his soul, few enough knew it of all in that thronged place. . . . At no previous time had there been such soundlessness in the hall, such keyed and strained attention. Hawthorn, at least, believed that Master Harry Carthew was to be a great man in England, was to climb high, with the Bible in his hand. For the town, that was of another cast of opinion, — if it conceived of him hardly so highly, if it shrugged its shoulders and waxed bitter over these mounting Puritans, yet it felt in its heart that they were mounting and gave to their personal qualities an uneasy recognition. It, too, marked Harry Carthew for a coming man — though it might not hold with Hawthorn that the fact of Satan's striking through the sorcerer's hand at this life marked a recognition on Satan's part of qualities the most dangerous to his sovereignty. And Carthew was young, and, though yet gaunt and pale and hardly recovered from that felon blow, of a manly form and a well-looking face. All through the long trial he had sat there so evidently poisoned and suffering — urged now by his brother and now by others to leave and take his rest, yet never going — sitting there with his eyes upon this murdering wizard. . . . The throng was ready to make him

into the hero, the visible St. George — standing there now with his spear lifted to give the one last, needed blow. . . . There was the dragon, there! the pale leech and all the wretches with him, and dim and horrible behind him all his train of evil works, and Satan horned and hoofed, spreading enormous bat wings, making the very hall brown and dusky! Full beside the leech, in all minds now, stood that most vile witch Joan Heron.

Carthew's words were few but explicit. "The sky was very dark — there seemed more thunder and lightning than there had been. I was several miles this side of Hawthorn. I was riding without regarding the road, my mind being on other things. My horse stopped short, then reared. I felt the blow. It was given by a cloaked figure that immediately vanished. . . . Yes, it bore resemblance to the leech, Gilbert Aderhold."

The words fell, aimed and deliberate, like the executioner's flaming tow upon the straw between the piled logs. A stillness followed as though the throng were waiting with parted lips for the long upward run of the flame. Then out of it came Joan's voice, quiet, distinct, clear, pitched loudly enough to reach from wall to wall. "Thou liar! Know all here that that man whom Will the smith's son has called the black man and saw through my window — that man" — she stood, her arm outstretched and her finger pointing — "that man was this man who speaks to you! Know all here that for weary months

Master Harry Carthew had pursued and entreated me who speak to you now — that when he turned that afternoon upon the Hawthorn road it was to ride to Heron's cottage and break in upon me there! Know that Will the smith's son, looking through the window, saw *him*. But he, hearing those two knock, and fearing discovery that would spot his fame, snatched up his cloak and made off through another door. But he hid not far away, and when they were gone and darkness had fallen, back he came, stealing in at night upon a woman alone. Know all of you here that I wanted not his love. Know all that we struggled together, and that I struck him in the side with a hunting-knife. Know all that he rode from Heron's cottage to Carthew House, and to save himself lied as you have heard!"

She stood an instant longer with her arm outstretched and her eyes upon Carthew, then slowly turned, moved past Aderhold, and, taking her place between Mother Spuraway and Grace Maybank, leaned her elbow on her knee and her chin on her hand.

The Witch Judge's instantaneous thunder, the clamour of voices, the hubbub in the hall appeared to give her no especial concern. When silence was obtained, and Carthew, white as death, gave a categorical denial, she only slightly moved her shoulders, and continued her contemplative gaze upon this scene and much besides. That if the crowd could have gotten at her she would most likely have

paid with death at once for her brazen mendacity, her measureless vile attempt to blacken one whom the Enemy most evidently feared and hated, appeared to trouble her neither. She sat as still as though consciousness were elsewhere. . . .

The next day it ended — the Hawthorn apostasy-sorcery-witchcraft trial. Judgement was given, sentence passed. The court, the crowd, the bishop, Hawthorn, the town, all seemed well of a mind. Death for six of the eight. For the youth who read too much and for the boy, old Dorothy's nephew, pillory and imprisonment; but for the six, death. Burning for the apostate and sorcerer, the leech Aderhold, though, so squeamish grew the times, he might be strangled first. For the five witches the gallows — though it was said that the old woman Dorothy had sickened with gaol-fever and would not live to be hanged. The sheriff would see to it that the execution took place within the month. In the mean time close prison for the evil-doers, and some thought, maybe, on how the Church and the Law for ever overmatched the Devil.

CHAPTER XXII

ESCAPE

JOAN sat on the edge of her straw bed, with her arms around her knees and her eyes upon the blank wall. For something to do she had been plaiting straws, making braids of many strands and laying them beside her in squares and triangles and crosses, That had palled, and now she was determinedly using the inner vision. The one thing she was bent upon was neither to think nor to feel these past days, weeks, and months, not to think or to feel at all closer than a year ago. She could bring back, she could recompose, she could live again, though with much subtle difference, where she had lived before. She could image forth, too; she could guide a waking dream. Now, with all the might that was in her, she made her prison cell to grow what once as a child she had seen, the sandy shore of the boundless sea. That was freedom, that was light and wind and space! Then she had raced along the beach, and in mind she ran now, long-limbed, with flying hair, only she turned not, came not back. . . . The Joan Heron here in gaol sat motionless. . . . One by one she added the other prisoners, until they all ran away by the sea beach, all hastening with the cool wind at their back and the free blue sky before. She drew

ahead. They were free and running to some happy land, but their presence made it harder not to think or feel, and so she ran ahead. Sea and sky, and harm forgot. . . . One was running beside her, leaving, too, the others. She would not image this one plainly, but they ran and ran, the sand beneath their feet. . . . It never occurred to her that this *was* magic, nor, if it had occurred, would she have cared. It was good magic.

The rainbow vanished, the storm returned. Here was the creaking, creaking of the dungeon door; here came again the hateful gaoler, the man who had watched her that she should not sleep! She did not turn her head or speak; perhaps to-day he would put down the jug of water and the crust of bread and go without attempt at parley.

But he was standing waiting, his hand upon the door which he had drawn to behind him. "Hist!" he said; "Joan Heron!"

The voice was different. When she had turned swiftly she saw that it was another man, a lean, nervous, quaint-faced man in a stained leather jerkin. Across the years since the huntsman's house and the castle wood and the castle and its servants there shot a memory. "Gervaise!" she said: "Gervaise, Sir Richard's man!"

"Ah," said Gervaise with a jerk of his head; "you've got a good memory! I hope that others' are n't as good! I've been out of these parts for the length of two Indies voyages."

He opened the door, put out his head and glanced up and down the passageway, then, with a satisfied nod, drew back, shut the door, and came close to Joan. "But I'm Sir Richard's man still, though not, I would have you note, to the world — no, not to the world! — The man who up till now locked and unlocked this door had a dream of a purse of gold, and so yesterday he quit the gaol's service with a speech to all men that he was sick halfway to death with a shaking cold palsy! But by good fortune he had a cousin to slip in his place. I am the cousin — for the nonce, for the nonce! Hist, Joan; I remember thee well at thy uncle's there in the wood! I'll tell thee what I once said to him. I said, said I, 'That niece of thine's got courage and wit!' — Joan, see this bundle!" He placed it beside her upon the straw.

"Aye," said Joan. "What's in it?"

"Good, plain apprentice doublet, hose, cap, and shoon! Scissors likewise to cut long hair."

Joan's hand closed upon it, but she said nothing. She looked at him with parted lips and a light in her eyes.

"Just so!" said Gervaise. "It's now close to sunset. At nine of the clock I'll be here again. Put everything you have on — put your long cut hair — into the smallest bundle you may. So, if I win you forth as a youth, my helper — God blinding them to the fact that I never brought you in! — they'll find no stitch of you to-morrow. 'The witch — the

witch hath vanished into thin air! No other one than Master Satan did ever help her forth!'"

"And when I'm forth?" said Joan.

"One thing at a time!" answered the new gaoler. "A before B; bud before flower! Roads may open. Here's no road at all."

"And that's true," said Joan. "But all the others?"

Gervaise gazed at her with his head on one side. "The others — the others! How do you think it possible that I should make a complete gaol delivery? It is not possible — not in the least possible."

"Why do you choose out me? And I thank you, Gervaise, but I think that I will not go."

Gervaise looked at her with light blue eyes, not sharp but penetrative, with a kind of basal, earth understanding. "You listen to me, Joan, and while you listen, just bear in mind that this is a dangerous business! Figure some authority out there storming, 'Where, in Cerberus's name, is the new gaoler?' Keep that in mind, I say, and that time's gold— gold? — nay, rubies and diamonds! Now, look you! 'T is no easy jaunt, forth from this prison and town, to some land of safety for witches and warlocks! Naught but courage and wit and strength and good luck by the armful will make it — and a crowd would never make it! There are two who are not to suffer death — but if they tried to flee and were taken, as, of course, they most likely would be, they would suffer it! Common sense saith, 'Those two

are better where they are.' The old woman named Dorothy died to-day. She's gone anyhow — made her escape clean, with Death and the scythe and hourglass. Do you think that Mother Spuraway could be dragged free — do you think that she could run and lie hidden and disguise herself, and starve if need be? For Grace Maybank — she hath pleaded that she is with child, and is not to be hanged until the elfling is born. Naught can be done there. And Elspeth No-Wit sits and laughs, and the sweetest words would not persuade her forth." He ceased speaking and stood with his light blue eyes upon her.

"There is," said Joan," one other."

"Aye, aye," said Gervaise. "Well, you see mine is the kindly feeling to youward, and Sir Richard's is the kindly feeling to himward. Not that Sir Richard hath not a kindly feeling to youward likewise! But, I know not why, he hath the greatest liking for the sorcerer!"

"Aye," said Joan. "And after?"

"In fact," said Gervaise, "and though I would not hurt your feelings, making you seem of less importance to yourself, this is a rescue planned in the first place for the sorcerer and not for the witch! But when I am brought in — having, see you, watched you from a nook in the crowd through the trial — I say to Sir Richard. . . . More than my saying, the sorcerer makes some such catechism as you've been making, and will only have freedom on terms. So Sir Richard nods and agrees. Double peril! But if

he will not come forth else? Then I may say that Sir Richard, too, marked you, if for a witch, then a brave witch, and that he hath a taste for the quality."

"Do you mean that Master Aderhold escapes this night?"

"'Escapes'! — 'escapes'! I know not who escapes. It's full of peril. But Humphrey Lantern, who takes him bread and water, served under Sir Richard in the wars. He's weary of turning keys, and hath an itch to see far countries. I know not; Fate's got it all hidden. — But if the stars are propitious, you might touch another prisoner's hand on the dark, windy road."

He stopped speaking. Joan took up the braided straws and laid them again in patterns, then brushed them aside. She sat with one hand in the other, her eyes upon the wall. Then she stood up, tall in her ragged gown. "Thank you, Gervaise! If it goes wrong, save yourself, for no worse harm can come to me. I'll make ready."

The sunset light dyed the town, the looping river, the castle on the hill, the great church, and the prison a pale red. The glow faded, night came down. Within the prison every passageway was dim enough; here a smoky light and there at a distance another, and all between a wavering dusk. The new gaoler and a youth, whom he mentioned to one they met as his nephew and helper, pursued these passages with a slow step and a halt here and a halt

there, as the gaoler's duties presented themselves. . . . But at last they turned a corner and saw before them a low portal. "Win through that and we're outside!" muttered Gervaise. "I've the key — and it would make a story, my getting it! Oiled, too."

Right and left and behind them they saw no one. He stopped. The key went in noiselessly, turned noiselessly, the door opened outward, they felt, instead of the heavy breath of the gaol, the air of the wide night. They stepped into an alley, black as pitch. Gervaise stooped, reinserted the key, and turned it. "Lock Discovery in overnight, anyway! Take the key and drop it in the river with your bundle."

Joan touched his arm. "There are two men standing yonder by the wall."

Gervaise nodded. "There's hope they're Lantern and the other. We agreed —"

They crept toward the two. Hope changed to certainty. There were some whispered words; then in the darkness the four figures stole forward, away from the prison walls that towered like the very form of Death. The night was black and quiet, but at the mouth of the alley as they left it for the wide darkness of the square they heard voices, and staves striking against the stones, and saw the lanterns of the watch. The pillory was at hand; they drew into its shadow, pressing close beneath the platform.

Swinging lanterns, forms ebon and tawny, footsteps, voices, approached, seemed to envelop them,

passed, lessened in bulk toward the High Street. The orange spheres of light dwindled to points, the voices from frightfully hoarse and loud thinned to a murmur afar. The four, Gervaise leading, moved from the pillory, friendly for once, and struck across the considerable open place. The hour was late and the townspeople housed. They saw no one in all the square. But as they came into the shadow of the great church tower they again heard voices nearing them — roistering voices of young men, petty gallants and citizens' sons, homeward bound from some place of drinking and outcasts' favours. "The church porch," motioned Gervaise. Like swallows they sped across and lodged themselves in the shadow-filled, cavernous place.

The roisterers came close, elected, indeed, just here to arrest their steps and finish out a dispute. "Black eyes are best!" averred one. "Grey eyes? Faugh! That vilest Hawthorn witch hath grey eyes! Ha, ha! Eyes like Joan Heron!"

"That she hath not! They are green. A grey eye is well enough! That vile witch's are green."

"Grey."

"I tell thee I saw them, green and wicked! Green beneath red gold hair."

"Grey! Grey as the sea, and hair like wheat when it is cut."

"Thou fool —"

"Thou knave —"

"Thou villain to liken my mistress's eye to that of

a vile witch and devil's whore! My sword shall make thee eat it —"

"Will it? Will it? Out, tuck —"

But a third and fourth, wiser or less flushed with wine, struck between. "Will you have the watch upon us and be clapped up for whether a vile witch's eyes are grey or green? Grey or green or blue or black or brown, ere the month be gone the crows will pick them out! Put up your blades! — I told you so! The watch —"

True it was that the watch was coming back. The roisterers fell suddenly into hushed and amicable converse, began to move, too, from before the church. But the watch were coming hastily, were already within eyeshot of the porch. It was not so dark now, either.

"The moon is up," muttered Gervaise. "We should have been clear of the town —"

It was rising, indeed, above the housetops. The watch and the young men were in parley, fifty yards away. The four from the prison pressed more closely into the shadow of the pillars. They stood in blackness and watched the full round moon silver the houses and the uneven floor of the square. The moonbeams touched the portal, picked out the carven figures that adorned it. Watch and the explanatory tavern group, voices and glowworm lanterns moved farther, lessened into distance, disappeared in the dark mouth of some street. Windows had been opened, householders were looking forth. It

needed to wait until all was again peace and sleeping time.

Aderhold spoke for the first time since the four had left the prison alley. The apprentice youth stood near him. They leaned against the one pillar, and though they thought not of it, they had among other seemings, in the lapping light and darkness, the seeming of two bound to one stake. He spoke in a whisper. "You are not afraid?"

"No."

"I knew that you would not be. Little worse can come, and something that is better may."

"Yes. . . . I had rather sink trying."

The moon whitened the carvings of the porch. Grotesque after grotesque came into the light: the man with the head of a wolf, the woman with a bat spreading its wings across her eyes, the demons, the damned, the beatified exulting over the damned, fox and goat and ape crossed with man and woman. The silver, calm light turned all from black to grey. The wind whispered, the nearer stars shone, the moon travelled her ancient road and threw transformed sunlight upon the earth. The minutes passed, the town lay fast asleep.

Gervaise moved from the porch, the others followed. They would not pass through the town; they took a steep street which led them first down to the river, and then, as steeply mounting, up to the castle wood. They went in silence, with a rapid step, and came without mishap under the shadow of the sum-

mer trees. Here was a wall which they climbed, dropping from its top into fern and brush. Joan knew the path that they took, a skirting path, walled with bracken, arched over by oak boughs. They heard wild things moving, but no human tongue questioned them. It was cool and dim, and because the moon was riding high and they must make all haste, they ran along this path which stretched a mile and more. Gervaise was light and spare as a jester; the wry-mouthed, surly, one-time soldier strong enough, though somewhat rusty in the joints; Aderhold was a thinker who lived much out of doors, a leech who walked to his patients, and where there was need walked fast; Joan, a woman of Arcady, with a step as light as a panther's. These two had behind them prison inaction and weakening, prison fare, anxiety, despair, strain, and torment. They were not in health and strength as they had been. But instinct furnished a mighty spur; if they must run to live, they would run! They ran in the scented darkness, the bracken brushing their arms, the moon sending against them, between the oak boughs, a silver flight of hurtless arrows. The mile was overpast, the path widened into a moonlit vale, the vale swept downward to a fringing cliff, by day not formidable, but difficult in this gliding, watery light. The four, with some risk of broken limbs, swung themselves down by jutting root and stone, dropped at last a sheer twelve feet, and found themselves clear of the wood and the castle heights,

clear of the town, out upon the grassy edge of the London road. It stretched before them, gleaming, bare, silent as to the feet which even now might be coming after them, silent as to whether or no they would outstrip those feet, silent as to the ends that it would serve. They lay for a minute upon the bank, breathing hard, regathering force. An owl hooted, *Tu-whoo! Tu-whoo!* They rose from the wayside growth and took the road. It ran so hard and gleaming — it might be a friend, it might be an enemy! Over them soared the night, far off they saw sleeping houses. The air was astir, the shadows of the trees dancing on the road.

They measured a mile, two miles. The road climbed somewhat; before them, in the flooding moonlight, they saw a gibbet with its arm and down-hanging chains.

"I know this place," said Aderhold.

The wry-mouthed man wagged his head. "Creak, creak! Once I saw fifty such in a lane, and the air was black with birds! This one's stood clean for a year."

It was like a letter against the sky. Joan stared at it. Her lips parted. "I would cut it down and set fire to it, and warm some beggar and her child."

Gervaise was looking about him. "The cross-roads are not far from here. He said —"

"Stand still. There's a horseman there."

Gervaise nodded his head and continued to move forward. The horseman moved from the lane mouth into the road. Even before Gervaise turned and

beckoned, Aderhold saw who it was. "The man with the hawk," he said, and smiled.

The man of the hawk and of the silver box dismounted, threw the reins over his horse's neck, and stepped forward to meet them. Road and lane and fields, the heap of rock amid foxgloves where Aderhold had sat one summer afternoon, the knoll crowned by the gibbet — all lay bare of human life, whitened by the moon.

"Ha, philosopher!" said Sir Richard. "Places called of ill omen are often just the other way round! Well met again, under a harmless tree!" He put out his hand.

Aderhold clasped it. "Poor enough to say, 'I thank you, friend!' And yet enough when it is the very truth. I thank you, friend!"

He spoke to Joan. "This is the man who opened our prison doors."

She came and stood beside him. "I thank you, sir. May you be through all time a friend to folk and find them friends to you!"

She stood tall and straight in man's dress. She had cut away the lengths of hair. A man's cap rested upon the short, thick locks. At first she made no motion to remove this cap; instead, as she faced Sir Richard, she made, involuntarily, the bend of knee that formed a curtsy; then, as instantly, she caught herself, recovered her height, and lifting her hand doffed the cap, and stood with it held against her breast.

The man from the castle gave a genial laugh. There was admiration in the sound. "Quick to learn! A flexible free mind — and courage! Good youth, I seem to remember you at the old huntsman's house."

"At times my father wrote for you, please you, Sir Richard. And twice or thrice you came and sat in the porch and talked with him and my uncle. And once it was cherry time, and I brought you a dish of cherries."

"I remember! And then you both went away." His kindly look dwelled upon her. "I watched you through that five-days' comedy in the Judgement Hall yonder. I found it worth my mind's while to watch you; no less worth it than to watch this other that they called servant of Evil! As for thanks, it is yet to be seen if there is much reason." He spoke to them both. "I am putting you on the road to the nearest port, and when you reach it I can bring you to a ship there. But before you reach it, you may be taken, and if you reach it and enter the ship, I cannot answer for what will come to you afterwards in life. I may be no friend at all."

"Friend, whatever comes," said Aderhold. "If we die to-morrow, friend on the other side of that."

"We'll touch hands on that," answered Sir Richard. "And now, seeing that you must go on to the cross-roads, I will speak while we walk."

They put themselves into motion, five human figures now upon the road, and the horse following

his master. The two escaped prisoners and their helper moved ahead; behind them came Gervaise and the gaoler, discoursing in whispers. The moon shone down, the wind took a harp-like tone.

"At the cross-roads you four — Humphrey Lantern, that was a good man-at-arms in the Low Countries, and Gervaise, a born wanderer and a man of mine between long flittings, and one Giles Allen, a chirurgeon, and John his brother — will take the road that runs to the port. If you reach it or reach it not, one wiser than I may tell! Gervaise knows a place where you may lie hidden to-morrow, going on at nightfall. You may or may not save yourselves. On the way thither I can give you but my wishes. But when you come to the port, — if you come to the port, — go at once to the harbour and find out the Silver Queen." He gave a packet wrapped in silk to Aderhold. "Give the letter therein to the captain. There is also a purse. — Nay, the thing must be done rightly!"

"The Silver Queen."

"The Silver Queen, sailing to Virginia. I have a venture in her, and the captain owes me somewhat. She carries a Virginia lading of adventurers and indentured men. — In Virginia are forests and savage men and wild beasts, but less preoccupation, maybe, with Exclusive Salvation and the Guilt of Doubt — though even in Virginia a still tongue were certainly best! — To Virginia is the only help that I can give."

"I am content," said Aderhold.

The man of the hawk looked at Joan.

"I am content," she said.

"Good!" said Sir Richard. "Humphrey Lantern is all for adventure and a new world. But Gervaise, when he has seen you safely shipped, will manage to cross to Ireland and take service for a time with my brother there. Next year I'm for France, and I look to find Gervaise dropped like an acorn on the road to Paris. But Lantern goes with you. What, good Humphrey, is now your name?"

The red-faced, wry-mouthed man scratched his head. "I had n't thought, Your Honour. . . . George is a good name — George Dragon, Sir Richard."

The little company fell silent, walking in the mooonlight upon a road bare as a sword. . . . Behind Joan and Aderhold receded the old life, sunk away the town, the road to Hawthorn and Hawthorn and its church, the Oak Grange and Hawthorn Forest, people a many, the two Carthews, Master Thomas Clement, Alison, Cecily, other names, folk a many, things done and suffered, old life. Before them stretched something new, strange life, bare as yet of feature as the road before them. Their imaginations were not busy with it; they left it veiled, but yet they felt its presence. . . . Undoubtedly, even at this moment, even earlier than this moment, their escape might be discovered. Already the hue and cry might be raised. Even now the finders might be on their track. They might be seized long ere they could reach the port, or, having reached it, before

they could reach the Silver Queen. The Silver Queen might be searched before it sailed. They might be dragged back. The gallows and the stake might be cheated no moment of their prey. They might again see Hawthorn faces. They knew all this, but their thought did not dwell upon it. Their minds saw dimly something new, bare yet of feature.

The man of the hawk walked musing beside Aderhold. At last he spoke. "We are not far from the cross-roads. When we are there you will go your ways and I shall turn and go back to the castle. . . . If we grow by means of all circumstance as it flows by and through us, how are you changed by what has lately passed?"

"This summer," said Aderhold, "I grew somewhat past bodily fear. I should like you to know that."

"I saw no great cowardice before. . . . How now do you feel toward your fellow man?"

"My fellow man is myself."

"And toward that which we call God?"

"As I did. . . . I seek that which is high within me."

The other nodded. "I understand. . . ." They walked on in silence until they saw before them the crossroads. Aderhold remembered the ragged trees, the dyke-like bank, the stake through the heart of the suicide. The night was wearing late. The moon shone small and high. Charles's Wain was under the North Star. The five came to a stand, and here the four said good-bye to the one.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ROAD TO THE PORT

THEIR side of the earth turned, turned with ceaseless motion toward the central orb. There grew a sense of the threshold of dawn, of the chill and sunken furthest hour, when the need was great for the door of light to open. The road they were upon was narrower, rougher, than the highway, with more hills to climb. The four travelled as rapidly as was possible, there being a goal to be reached before sunlight and the world abroad. Gervaise and Lantern swung on without overmuch effort, but the faces of Joan and Aderhold were drawn and the beads stood on their foreheads. Behind them were long prison, scanty fare, bodily hurt, broken strength. Their lips parted, their breath came gaspingly. They went on from moment to moment, each step now a weariness, all thought suspended, the whole being bent only on endurance, on measuring the road that must be measured. They did not speak, though now and then one turned eyes to the other.

Far off a cock crew and was answered by another. Vaguely the air changed, the world paled, a steely light came into the east. Gervaise looked at the two. "We'll rest here until there's colour in the sky. We've come pretty fast." There was a

great stone by the road. Aderhold and Joan sank upon it, lay outstretched, still as in the last sleep. He had a wide cloak, she had none. He raised himself upon his hand and spread over her the half of this. They lay with closed eyes, drinking rest.

Far off and not so far, more cocks were crowing. In the eastern sky the bars of grey turned purple, then into them came a faint red. The birds were cheeping in the tree-tops. The mist veil over field and meadow grew visible. Gervaise and Lantern, who had been seated with their knees drawn up, arms upon knees and head upon arms, raised their eyes, marked the red in the sky, and got to their feet. Gervaise went and touched the two. "Time to go on! We've got to get hidden before Curiosity's had breakfast."

They went on, the light strengthening, the air warming, a myriad small sounds beginning. In less than a mile they came to a branching road, rough and narrow. Gervaise leading, they entered this, followed it for some distance, and left it for a half-obliterated cart track running through woods. In turn they quitted the woods for a stubblefield, plunged from this into a sunken lane, and so in the early sunlight came before a small farmhouse, remote and lonely, couched and hidden between wooded hills. "My granther's brother's house," said Gervaise. "Stay you all here while I go spy out the land." They waited in the sunken lane, the blue sky overhead. The wry-mouthed man busied him-

self with a torn shoe. Joan and Aderhold knelt in a warm hollow of the bank, leaned against the good earth.

"*Giles and John Allen,*" he said. "Do not forget the names."

"No. . . . When I speak to you, am I to say, 'Giles'?"

"Aye, — aye, John."

"Do you think they will not know that I am a woman?"

He looked at her critically for the first time. "You have height and a right frame. Your voice is deeper than most women's. Now that your hair is cut, I have seen youths with locks so worn and of that colour and thickness. You are pale from prison and unhappiness, but the sun will tan your cheeks. You have mind and will, and all that you do you do with a just art. Discovery may come, but it need not come —"

Gervaise reappeared. "It's all right! The old people will not blab, and their two daughters and the ploughman have propitiously gone to a fair! Now, Master Allen, and your brother, and good George Dragon —" They moved toward the house. Gervaise jerked his thumb toward a barn that showed beyond. "Good straw — good, warm, dusk corner to lie *perdu* in, back of the eaves! I'll bring food, bread and milk. So you'll have your rest to-day, and to-night we'll cover as many miles as may be. — This way! We'll not go through the house.

Say we're taken, I'd rather not drag the good folk in more than ankle-deep."

The barn was dim and wholesome-smelling. The piled straw in the loft felt good beneath aching frames. They made with bundles of it a chance-seeming barrier, behind which in a fragrant hollow they prepared to rest. Close overhead was the brown roof that, beyond their niche, sloped steeply upward a great distance. A square had been cut for light and air; through it poured vagrant, scented breezes, and in and out flew the swallows. The light was thick and brown; it would take keen eyes to see aught but straw, rudely heaped. Gervaise brought a basket filled with homely, country fare, and then a great jug of spring water. They ate and drank, and then set watches — one to watch while the others slept. Humphrey Lantern took the first.

Rest was sweet, sleep was sweet. . . . Joan woke sometime in the early afternoon. There in a hollow of his own sat Gervaise, succeeded to Lantern's watch. He sat, blue-eyed and meditative, chewing a straw. Lantern sprawled at a little distance, in sleep back, perhaps, in the old wars. Nearer lay Aderhold, his arm thrown across his eyes, profoundly sleeping. At first Joan was bewildered and did not know where she was; then the whole surged back. She lay quite still, and memory painted for her picture after picture.

Presently Gervaise, glancing her way, saw that her eyes were open. He nodded to her and crept over

the straw until they were close neighbours, when he seated himself Turk fashion and asked if she had slept.

She laughed. "Unless I was dead, I was asleep."

"He has not moved. Prison life's a hard life, and then I understand that before that he was up day and night with the plague. . . . Well, and what do you think of the wide world before you?"

"Is it so wide?"

"That's as you take it. It's as wide as your vision, your taste, and your hearing."

"I do not wish to be hanged. . . . It used to come and gather round me when I slept, there in the dungeon, in the prison. First the place grew large, and then it filled with people, — I could feel them in the dark, — and then I knew where the gallows was, and hands that burned me and bruised me put a rope around my neck, and in the dark the people began to laugh and curse. And then I woke up, and my hands and arms were cold and wet, and I said, 'So it will be, and so the rope will feel, and so they will laugh!' . . . Over and over. . . . But it did not come to me here, though I was asleep. I do not believe that they will take us now."

"Do you believe in witches and black men and Satan and his country?"

"I used to. Is n't every little child taught it? It 's hard to rub out what they taught you when you were a child. But do I believe it now?" She laughed with a bitter mirth. "My oath, on anything

you please, that I do not believe it now! I believe that some folk have more good than bad in them, and a few have far more good than bad. And that some folk have more bad than good in them, and a few have far more bad than good. And that most folk are pretty evenly mixed, and that now one having walks forth and now another. But that we are all folk."

"That presents well enough," said Gervaise, "my manner of thinking. But then I have lived long with Sir Richard."

They fell silent. A bird flew in at the window. The pleasant, drowsy scent of the hay was about them, the sun-shot dusk, the murmur of the wind across the opening. "Is your watch nearly over," asked Joan, "and were you going to wake him next? I am awake already, so give it to me."

"Nay, nay," said Gervaise; "neither to you nor to him! I'll sit here for another two hours and think of the flowers I might have grown. Then Lantern will take it again. You two are to get your rest. — I like well enough to converse with you, but my advice is to shut your eyes and go back to sleep."

Joan smiled at him and obeyed. She shut her grey eyes, and in two minutes was back at the fountain of rest for overwrought folk. She slept, slept, and Aderhold slept. When they waked the sun was hanging low in the west. They waked at a touch from Gervaise. "Best all of us open our eyes and pull our senses together! I hear the two daughters

and the ploughman, and maybe company with them, coming back from the fair."

There were heard, indeed, from the lane, not far away, voices talking freely and all together. Lantern crept to the window and with care looked forth. He came back. "Country folk — five or six, and merry from the fair." The voices reached the farmhouse, entered it, and became muffled. The sun dropped behind the hills.

Twilight was not far advanced when there sounded a footstep in the barn below the hayloft. The four, still before, now lay hardly breathing.

The footstep approached the loft, halted beside the ladder that led up. "Gervaise" said a quavering, anxious voice. "Granther's brother," murmured Gervaise, and crept cautiously to the edge of the loft. Presently he disappeared down the ladder, and the three, crouched where the roof was lowest, heard a muted colloquy below. The farmer's voice sounded alarmed and querulous, Gervaise's soothing. At last they ceased to talk, and the old man's slow and discontented step was heard to leave the barn. Gervaise came up the ladder and crawled over the straw to the escaped prisoners and runaway gaoler. The loft was now in darkness, only the square window glimmered yet, framing a sky from which the gold had not quite faded.

"It's boot and saddle, sound horn and away!" he said in a sober whisper. "We had not been gone two hours when some officious fool must seek the heart's

ease of Lantern's company! No Lantern to be found — all dark! No new turnkey to be found either. Whereupon they waken an authority, and he's inspired to open dungeon doors and look within! Hue and cry! Town first, but with the morning light men a-horseback on all roads. — They had it all at the fair — brought it all home. County's afire to bring the wild beasts back. Country for as many miles as necessary will be scoured clean as a prize pannikin. Reward for capture, living or dead; — bands out to earn it. All manner penalties for any who harbour. The goodman here put two and two together, — matched four with four, — and at the first chance, while they 're all at supper, comes shivering out to warn us off. Granther's brother 'll not tell, but travel it is! — Humphrey Lantern, you take the basket with what food 's left. We 'll need it. Toss the straw together so 't will not show the lair. We'll just wait till that last light goes."

They waited, felt their way to the ladder and down it, then out of the barn. Voices were noisy in the house a stone's throw away. A woman came to the open door and stood looking out. When she had turned away, they entered the lane and followed it until it set them in the wood track they had left in the morning. Here they paused to consider their course. In that direction so many miles, as the crow flew, lay the port. Return to the road they had left at dawn, strive to keep upon it at least through the night, and so make certainly the greatest speed

toward their goal? Night-time, and ordinarily there would be none or little travel through the night, and that little easily hidden from. But to-night the road might be most perilous; harrow and rake might be dragging along it. Nevertheless they decided for the road.

It was now utterly dark. They saw nothing, heard nothing, but the small continuous voice of the hot, dry night. They were rested; to Joan and Aderhold especially there seemed to have come anew youth and strength. They walked steadily, with a swinging step, and the country fell behind them and the sea grew nearer. They spoke only at long intervals and then in whispers.

"Luck's with us," offered Gervaise. "I'd almost rather see it more chequered! Very Smooth always has a mocking look in her eyes."

Lantern growled in his throat. "I have n't had much smooth in *my* life. It owes me a little smooth."

The moon rose. It showed them on either hand a rolling country, and before them a village. The road ran through this; therefore, for the time being, they would leave the road. They crept through a hedge and found themselves in a rough and broken field. Crossing this they pierced a small wood and dipped down to a stream murmuring past a mill. The great wheel rose before them, the moon making pearls of the dripping water. The stream had a footbridge. They hesitated, but all was dark and silent. They crossed, and as they stepped upon the beaten earth

on the farther side, two dogs sprang upon them from the shadow of the mill. They came barking furiously — the refugees snatched what stick or stone they could reach and beat them back. One was cowardly and stood off and barked, but the other, a great black beast, sprang upon the first in his path. It chanced to be Joan. She caught him by his own throat before he could reach hers, but he was fierce and strong and tore from her grasp. His teeth met in the cloth of her jerkin, he dragged her to the ground. Aderhold's hands were at his throat, choking his jaws open, pushing him backward. Over the physician's bent shoulder Lantern's arm rose and fell, the moon making the dagger gleam. The dog loosened his grip, howled, and gave back with a slashed and bleeding muzzle.

Out of a hut, built beside the mill, came a man's voice, roughly threatening. "Who's there? Who's there? Ill-meaning folk take warning!"

As they did not answer, the owner of the voice burst from the hut and came toward them, shouting to the dogs to hold fast and swinging a great thorn stick. The moon showed a half-dressed, stout rustic, bold enough but dull of wit, and still heavy, besides, with sleep. Behind him came a half-grown boy.

"Call off your dogs!" cried Gervaise. "We are seamen ashore, making from the port to the town of ——. They told us there was a village hereabouts, and we kept on walking after night, thinking to come

to it. But we think it's bewitched and walks as we walk. Call your dogs off! We're harmless men, used to the sea and crossing a strange country. Put us right, friend, and thank you kindly!"

"What have you done to Holdfast? He's frighted and bleeding."

"He pulled one of us down and nothing else served to make him loosen grip. 'T will heal and no harm done!"

But a controversy gathered in the eyes of the miller's man. "That dog's worth all the 'gyptians and vagrants and seamen between here and London town! If you think you're going round murdering dogs —"

"I think," said Gervaise, "that I've in my pouch a crown piece which I got of a gentleman for a parrokeet and an Indian pipe. Let's see if 't wont salve that muzzle." He drew it forth and turned it to and fro in the moonlight. "Ask the dog. Hark 'ee! He says, 'Take it, and let harmless sailor folk pass!'" He slid it into the peasant's hand, who stood looking down upon it with a dawning grin. "Cross this bridge," asked Gervaise, "and we'll be in the path to the village?"

"Aye, aye," answered the fellow. "If you be harmful folk, let them find it out there! — Be you sure this piece is good? You be n't coiners or passers?"

"We be n't," said Gervaise. "The piece is as good as the new breeches it will buy."

They recrossed the bridge, stepping from it into the wood already traversed. The boy's shrill voice came to them from across the stream. "Father, father! They're four, and 't was four the man told us broke gaol! They be n't sailors — they be the witches!" His voice took a bewildered tone. "Only one of them was a woman — and they're going toward the town —"

"What I be going to do," answered the man, "is to go up t' the house and waken miller —"

The dogs were still barking. The boy's voice rose shriller and shriller. "I know they 're witches! They had glowing eyes and they were taller than people —"

The four plunged more deeply into the wood. The confused sound died behind them. . They went up the stream a mile, came upon a track that ran down to stepping-stones, crossed the water for the second time, and once more faced seaward; then after a time turned at right angles and so struck the road again, the village well passed. But the détour had cost them heavily in time. Moreover, even in the night-time, there grew a feeling of folk aware, of movement, a fear of eyes, of a sudden shout of arrest. . . . They heard behind them a trampling of horses' hoofs, together with voices. There was just time to break into a friendly thicket by the roadside, and crouch there among the hazel stems, out of the moonlight. There came by a party of men, some a-horseback, some on foot.

"Four," said one distinctly.

"Shall we beat that thicket?"

"They could n't have gotten this far."

"I'll ride through it to make sure —"

Man and horse came into the thicket. They passed within ten feet of the four lying flat, but touched them not and saw them not. . . . When all were gone the sorcerer and the witch and their companions came forth and again pressed seaward. The dawn appeared, the sky unearthly cold and remote behind the clean black line of the earth. It showed a homeless country for them. With the first grey gleam there began a traffic upon the road. They were passed in the dimness by a pedlar with his pack, a drover with sheep. They saw coming a string of carts, and they left the road again, this time for good. They lay now amid heather upon a moor, and in the pale, uncertain light considered their course. The miles were not many now before them, but they were dangerous miles. They decided at last to break company and, two and two, to strive for the port. Say that, so they arrived there, then would they come as well to an inner ring of dangers. . . . But they all strove for cheer, or grim or bright, and Gervaise appointed for rendezvous an obscure small inn called The Moon, down by the harbour's edge. It was kept by a man known to Sir Richard. Get to The Moon, whisper a word or two which Gervaise now furnished, and the rest would probably go well. The problem was to get there.

It was also to decide, if they divided, who would go with whom. Gervaise looked at Aderhold. "Will you, sir, take Humphrey Lantern, and Joan go with me?" There was a silence, then Aderhold spoke, "You have proved yourself the best of guides and guards. But life has taught me, too, to watch for dangers and in some measure has given me skill. And she and I are the heinous ones and the desperate." He turned his eyes to Joan. "Shall we not keep together?"

She nodded. "Very good. . . . The sky is growing red."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FARTHER ROAD

WHAT were Gervaise's and Lantern's adventures they would hear when they reached The Moon. Their own, throughout this day, led them to no harm. They had been for long in the hand of Ill Fortune; it seemed now that she slept and her grasp relaxed. The first outward happening came quickly, ere the sun was an hour high. They were crossing a heath-like, shelterless expanse, when a sudden *Hilloa!* halted them. Two men were rapidly approaching over the heath.

"If we can, we will evade them," said Aderhold. "If we cannot and they would keep us by force—?"

"They are not wrestlers nor giants," answered Joan. "If they have no weapon, mayhap we can give them as good as they send—"

The two ran up, looked at them suspiciously. "What do you here? Who are you?"

"Nay, who are *you?*" said Aderhold. "We are lookers for a reward."

The opposing pairs stood and eyed each other. The newcomers were two lank and unhealthy-looking, plainly dressed, town-appearing young men.

"Fie!" said one. "We also search, but not for love

of lucre and silver pounds in purses! We would serve God by stamping his foes into dust!"

"Which way have you looked?"

The more garrulous of the two swept his arm around. "Unless the Prince of the Power of the Air hath held them invisible to the eyes of the Elect, they are not in that direction nor in that! My companion, Only Truth Turner, and I were about to seek in the quarter to which I see you are addressed. Let us, then, seek for a while in company. And what, friends, may be your names?"

"I am Relative Truth Allen, otherwise known as Giles Allen, and this is my brother, Be-ye-kind-to-one-Another. — Four together, is it not so? Three fierce, foreign-looking men, and a short, dark woman."

"We did n't," said Only Truth, "hear them described. But there will assuredly be some devil's mark whereby to know them."

They were now moving together over the heath. Each of the four had a stout stick, broken at some time in their several journeyings. With theirs the two townsmen now and again beat some clump of furze or thorn. Once a hare rushed forth and away, and once a lark spread its wings and soaring vanished into the blue. "Do you think," said the speaker, whose name was Wrath Diverted, "do you think that that hare and bird might have been —? I understand that in the trial the Hawthorn witches all avowed that they became bird or beast at will."

Aderhold followed the lark with his eyes. "I have seen human beings who reminded me of bird or beast, and I have seen bird and beast who reminded me of human beings. If that one up yonder is a witch, she hath strength of wing!"

The lark disappeared; the hare came not back. "Even so," said Only Truth, "there would be two left. But I hold that those were natural creatures."

They walked through the bright morning, over the high bare world. "We came out," said Wrath Diverted, "to see my brother Another-Pays-my-Debt who dwells at Win-Grace Farm. Yesterday came news of the loosing of Beelzebub. Whereupon many made themselves into bands and went forth even as hunters, and at dawn this morning Only Truth and I also."

"Let us keep our faces seaward," said Aderhold. "You have looked that way and we have looked this."

"Good," answered Wrath Diverted; "but we should examine that dip in the earth I see yonder."

They searched the hollow and found naught to the purpose, which done, they went briskly on, but kept a constant watch to right and left. "This heath," said Wrath Diverted, "will presently fall to tilled lands with roads and dwellings, byways and hedges. Then there will be places to search, but here there is naught — Were you at the trial of the troublers of Israel?"

He spoke to Joan. "No," she answered. "We heard of it. Everybody heard of it."

"For my part," said Only Truth, "I cannot conceive how a man when he hath choice of masters should choose so scurvy an one! Here is a King whom you may serve who, if in this world He seemeth at times neglectful of his servants and niggardly in comforts and rewards, yet, when you have come to the next world which is his true city and court, you have his sign manual for it that you will have honours and titles and riches without end! Moreover, your body will be happy and comforted, and you will not again be sorrowful or tried, nor ever have to work, but only stand and praise. — Not so with that other man, who will not kneel here nor wear this Master's livery! Comes King Satan and claps him, 'You are mine!' Then mayhap he is led to a dance of unlawful and honey-sweet pleasures, or is given a heap of gold, or is dressed in a purple mantle and given a sceptre to hold, or is made drunk with worthless knowledge! But it is all a show and turneth to gall and wormwood. For incontinent he dieth. Nay, oftenest there is not in his hire the honey-sweet nor the gold and purple! For the other King's servant even here triumpheth, and Satan's man dieth a lazar and poor, even if he be not hanged, torn asunder, broken on the wheel, or burned. Then goeth the wicked wretch to his Master's capital and court, even as the good man goeth to his. But the one servant lifteth his feet in haste from burning

marl and findeth no cool floor to set them on. He swalloweth smoke and flames and findeth no water in all hell. His flesh blackeneth to a crisp, but is never burned senseless. A million years pass, and not one second but he hath felt first pain and terror. Eternity, eternity! and never will his anguish lessen. He looketh about him and seeth those for whom he had affection — for like liketh like — burning with him, and about their feet, creeping and wailing, the unbaptized babes. He looketh up, and he seeth across the gulf the other King's court, and the Happy Servant. And the Happy Servant looketh down and seeth him, and his own bliss waxeth great. Wherefore —"

Wrath Diverted took the word. "Nay! You err, Brother Only Truth, in using the word 'choice.' There is no choice, none! — that is, none on our part. Attribute no merit to us who attain Salvation! Attain it, do I say? Nay, we attain it not, we are *lifted* into it. Another pays my debt!"

"Nay, I meant it in that wise," said Only Truth. "A babe in the faith knoweth that all are rightly lost and damned. Lost, lost! all are lost. Five thousand and more years ago it happened! One day, nay, one hour, one minute — and all was done and over! Then all souls sank to hell, and all put on Satan's livery. In hell are folk who have burned and howled five thousand years! Lost, lost, all are lost! But the King, because of the Prince's intercession, holds out his sceptre to those among us whom he chooses out.

But we have no goodness or merit of our own! Miserable sinners are we all, and the due of perdition!"

"Precisely so," said Wrath Diverted. "In Adam's fall, we sinned all. Wherefore they in hell, whether they be pagan or heathen or ignorant or babes, have no reason to complain. But while all are guilty there be some who have added rebellion to rebellion, and sewed the web of disobedience with the needle of blasphemy! They be those who refuse to worship! They be those who will not admire the Plan of Salvation!"

"Aye," said Only Truth. "Apostates, Sadducees, atheists, miscreants, infidels, unbelievers, witches, warlocks, wizards, magicians, and sorcerers! Damned and lost! They howl in the hottest cauldron and burn in a furnace seven times heated!"

So discoursing they came insensibly into a strip of country, green and pleasant with late summer. Before them was a hillside with a parcel of children at play, a dozen or more, and among them a big boy or two. These now gathered into a knot and stared down at the pedestrians. "Four — coming across Blackman's Heath!"

There arose a buzzing sound, half from fright, half from a sense of exciting adventure. One bolder than his fellows called down. "Be you the witches?"

"Witches! — witches—!"

"They be all men —"

"Ho! Satan could make them all seem men! They pray to Satan and he lets them turn what they

will. Bats and red mice and ravens and horses —"

"So he could! Witches!"

"They be four, and they come running over Blackman's Heath —"

A stone leaped down the hillside. Another followed, and struck Only Truth, who grew red and angry and brandished his stick. The assailants shouted, half in fear, half in glee, and gave somewhat back; then seeing that they were safe, well above the assailed and with the open hill behind them, stopped and threw more stones. Only Truth would have made after them, up the hillside, but Aderhold checked him. "Do not fight bees and children —"

They were presently out of stoneshot. But the children might carry news and set others on their path. "Those escaped are four," said Aderhold to Wrath Diverted, "and we are four. It will not be convenient to be stopped and questioned on that ground."

"I believe that you are right," answered Wrath Diverted. "Moreover, you and your brother are evidently country-bred, and walk more swiftly than is comfortable for us who dwell in towns. Let us part, therefore in amity. I see yonder a road which should furnish easier walking than this growth and unevenness beneath our feet."

"Then," said Aderhold, "we, being as you say, country-bred, will keep on seaward over these fields and downs."

An hour later the two lay in a pit dug long since

for some purpose and now half filled with old dead brush, while a formidable chase went by. These were mounted men, officers of the law, armed with an accurate description, among them, indeed, a sheriff's man who knew the escaped by sight. They came trampling by; they looked down into the pit as they passed, and thought they saw true bottom and naught there but a litter of dead leaves and twigs; they checked their horses not many yards from the opening and stood conferring. Their voices came down in an indistinguishable hoarse murmur like the sea against the strand. They shook their bridles and rode away. . . . The two, who had lain half-stifled, covered by the bed of brush, stirred, heaved the stuff away, rose gasping to their knees. Silence and the blue sky. They crouched, eye above the rim of the pit, until sight gave reassurance, then climbed forth and brushed from each other dead leaf and ancient dust.

"That was like a grave," said Joan.

Aderhold stood gazing, his hand above his eyes. "Far off yonder — that is ocean."

"Where?"

They stood in silence. About them was sunny stillness; far off lay the sapphire streak. Tension — action — the mind held to an arduous matter in hand — in the moments between, exhaustion, concern only with rest — so had passed the time since they had crept from the gaol into the black gaol alley. Now suddenly there came a sense of relaxa-

tion, then of poise, then of time before them. Years — there might be years. . . . Even that set amount and partition dissolved like a mist. They were going to be together, and their minds placed no term.

They were, the two of them, sincere and powerful natures. Now they ceased to look at the ocean which their bodies would sail, and turned and met each other's eyes. . . . Another division melted from between them. He had been to her a learned man, of a station higher than her own. She had said "Sir," and "Master Aderhold." He was still, through circumstance, more learned than she, with a wider range of knowledge and suffering, with a subtler command of peace and mind's joy. But she had power to learn and to suffer and to weave joy; there was no natural inequality. The other inequality, the unevenness in station, now melted into air. Given substance only by long convention, it now faded like a dream and left a man and woman moulded of one stuff, peers, unity in twain.

"The ocean!" said Joan: "to sail upon the ocean! What things happen that once you thought were dreams!"

"Aye," said Aderhold. "Long to the height — imagine to the height — build in the ether . . ."

They moved toward the sea. The country was not populous. Avoiding as they did all beaten ways, taking cover where they might of wood or hillside, they seemed to have come into a realm of security.

They were faint with hunger. Before them rose a solitary cottage bowered in trees. After weighing it this way and that, they went forward soft-footed, and peered from behind a stout hedge of thorn. A blue feather curled from the chimney, the door stood open, and on a sunny space of grass three young women were spreading linen to bleach. They hummed and chattered as they worked; they were rosy and comely, and looked kind.

Aderhold spoke with his hands on the top of the gate. "Maidens, will you give two hungry folk a bite and a sup? We can pay a penny for it."

The three looked up and stood in doubt; then one ran to the cottage door. An elderly woman, tall and comely, appeared, hearkened to her daughter, then stepped across the bit of green to the gate. "Be you vagrants and masterless men?"

"No," answered Aderhold. "We are honest folk seeking work, which we look to find in the port. We are not far from it, good mistress?"

"Less than three miles by the path, the lane, and the road," said the woman. "You can see the roofs and towers and, if you listen, hear the church bells."

They were, indeed, ringing, a faint, silver sound. Aderhold listened; then, "We are very hungry. If we might buy a loaf of you we would eat it as we walked —"

"Nay, I'll give you bread," said the woman. "I or mine might be hungry, too, sometime — and what odds if we never were!" She spoke to one of

the three standing amid the bleaching linen. "Alice! get the new-baked loaf —"

Alice turned toward the cottage. The two others came nearer to the gate. The church bells were still ringing, fine and far and faint. They seemed to bring something to the woman's mind. "They say they've taken the Hawthorn folk who ran from prison."

"Where —"

"Two men came by and told us. A miller and his men and dogs took them last night. They fought with fire and Satan was seen above the mill-wheel. But they took them all, the two men said, and gave them to the nearest constable, and so now the countryside can rest." She stood with her capable air of strength and good nature, looking over the green earth to the distant town. "There must be witches because God wrote the Bible and it cannot be mistaken. Otherwise, of course, there are a lot of things . . . I used to know Hawthorn when I was a girl. And Roger Heron. More years than one I danced with him about the maypole — for then we had maypoles."

"Roger Heron!" It was Joan who spoke.

"Aye. I was thinking. . . . He's dead of the plague. And his daughter's Joan Heron, the main witch. Life's a strange thing."

Her daughter brought the loaf of bread and also a pitcher of milk and two earthenware cups. The other girls left the white, strewn linen and drew near. The cottage was a lonely one, and few passed, and

by nature all were kind-hearted and social. Alice gave a cup to each of the wanderers, and then, tilting the pitcher, filled the cups with milk. Giles and John Allen thanked her and, hungry and thirsty to exhaustion, drank and were refreshed.

But Joan, when she had put down the cup, moved nearer to the mother of the three. "Did you ever see — the witch?"

The woman, who had been listening to the church bells, turned her strong and kindly face. "Roger Heron brought her here once when she was a child. There was no ill in her then — or I saw it not. Roger Heron should not have had an evil child. There was little evil in him."

The middle daughter was more prim of countenance than the others. She now put on a shocked look. "But, mother! That is to deny Original Sin and Universal Guilt!"

The elder woman made a gesture with her hand. It had in it a slight impatience. "I do not mean," she said, "that we have n't all of everything in us. But Roger Heron was a good man."

"Ah!" said the youngest daughter, "how any one can be a witch and hurt and harm, and be lost for aye, and leave a vile name —"

"Aye," said the second; "to know that your name was Joan Heron, and that it would be a by-word for a hundred years!"

"I am glad that Roger Heron died of the plague and waited not for a broken heart," said the mother,

and took the pitcher from the grass. "How far have you walked to-day?"

Aderhold answered. Presently, the loaf of bread in hand, he said that they must go on if they would reach the port before night, and that they gave warm thanks for kindness. . . . They left the friendly cottage with the sunny spread of grass and the bleaching linen and the kindly women. A dip of the land, a turn of the path, and all vanished as if they had sunk into earth. Before them, fraying the horizon, they saw the distant town.

Aderhold spoke. "You were there when you were a child. Do you remember it?"

She answered. "I remembered at last — not at first: not plainly. I remember the sea."

Her voice was broken. He looked and saw that she was weeping.

He had not seen her so since the last time he had come to Heron's cottage, and she had wept for her father's death. There had been no weeping in prison, nor in that Judgement Hall, nor since. He knew without telling that though she felt grief, she controlled grief. But now, startled by a tide she had not looked for, control was beaten down. All about them was a solitariness, a green and silent, sunny world. She struggled for a moment, then with a gesture of wild sorrow, sank upon a wayside rise of earth and hid her face. "Weep it out," said Aderhold in a shaken voice; "it will do you good."

He stood near her, but did not watch her or touch

her. Instead he broke the loaf of bread into portions and kept a lookout north and south and east and west. No human being came into range of vision. The slow minutes went by, then came Joan's voice, broken yet, but steadying with every word. "All that is over now — I'll not do that again."

She came up to him and took a piece of the bread. "Let us go on. We can eat it as we go."

They walked on.

"It was Gervaise and Lantern," said Aderhold, "who told her that tale of a capture at the mill. They are ahead. . . . I have seen brave men and women, but I have seen none braver than you, Joan. . . . Life is very great. There are in it threads of all colours and every tone that is, and if happiness is not stable, neither is misery. You are brave — be brave enough to be happy!"

The sun declined, the town ahead grew larger against a soft and vivid sky. Now they could see the harbour and that there were ships at anchor. They now met, overtook, or were passed by people. Some spoke, some went on preoccupied, but none stopped and questioned them. They entered the town by a travelled way, slipping in with a crowd of carts and hucksters. Within, and standing for a moment looking back, they saw coming with dust and jingling the party that had passed them lying in the pit.

They turned, struck into a narrow way that led downward to the sea, and came upon the waterside in the red sunset light. A fishwife crossed their

path. "The Moon Tavern? Yonder, beyond the nets." They came to it in the dusk, its sign a great, full moon with a man, a dog, and a thornbush on the golden ground. As it loomed before them, Gervaise stepped from the shadow of a heap of timber. "Greeting, Giles and John! George Dragon and I have been here this hour. — And yonder lies the Silver Queen."

CHAPTER XXV

THE SILVER QUEEN

THE SILVER QUEEN, a ship neither great nor small, high-pooped, white-sailed, her figurehead a crowned woman, her name good for seaworthiness, ploughed the green water. Her sailors and the adventurers for new lands whom she carried watched their own island sink from view, watched the European coast, saw it also fade, saw only the boundless, restless main. The ship drove south, for the Indies' passage.

Mariners and all, she carried a hundred and sixty souls. Captain Hugh Bard was the captain — a doughty son of the sea. Her sailors were fair average, tough of body, in mind some brutal, some weak, some good and true men. She was carrying colonists and adventurers to the New World, accessions to the lately established settlement at Jamestown. Among these men were sober-minded Englishmen, reputable and not ill-to-do, men who had warred or traded with credit in various parts of the world, who had perhaps joined in earlier ventures to American shores. These carried with them labourers, indentured servants, perhaps a penniless kinsman or two, discontented at home. The mass of those upon the Silver Queen were followers and in-

dentured men. But there were likewise adventurers going singly, free lances, with enough or just enough to pay passage, men all for change and roving, or dare-devil men, or men with wild fancies, hopes, ambitions, intents, or men merely leaving worst things for a conjectural better. Also there were a few who thought to practise their professions in the new settlement, a barber and perfumer, a musician, a teacher, a lawyer, and a divine. It was an average swarm from old England, in the early years of colonization.

Aboard was but one woman, and she was not known as a woman. She was called John Allen, and went as the still-mouthed and loneliness-loving brother of the chirurgeon Giles Allen. In the first days the latter had stated to a group, from which John Allen had risen and gone away, that his brother was but now recovering from a melancholy brought about by the death of one whom he had loved. Now those aboard were not beasts, but men with, in the main, answering hearts to lovers' joys and woes. For the most part not over-observant or critical, and with their own matters much in mind, they took the statement as it was given them and allowed to John Allen silence and solitude — such silence and solitude as were obtainable. Silence and solitude were all around upon the great sea, but the ship was a hive adrift.

Captain Hugh Bard was under obligations to Sir Richard. Clients of Sir Richard — nothing known

but that they were folk whom that knight was willing to help from England — were sure of his blunt good offices. Moreover, the ship's doctor fell ill, whereupon Giles Allen offered his services, there being much sickness among the colonists. The captain nodded, found that he had aboard a skilled physician, and took a liking to the man himself. Aderhold asked no favours for himself, and none that might arouse suspicion for her who passed as his brother. But yet, with a refinement of skill, he managed to obtain for her what she wanted in that throng of men — a little space, a little distance.

She never added difficulty to their situation. She was no fine lady. She was yeoman born and bred, courageous and sane. It was yet the evening glow of the strong Elizabethan age. Men and women were more frank and free in one another's company than grew to be the case in a later period. The wife or mistress, sometimes the sister, in the dress of page or squire, fellow traveller, attendant at court, sometimes fellow soldier, made a commonplace of the age's stage-play or romantic tale. If the masquerade occurred oftener in poem or play than in fact, yet in the last-named, too, it occurred.

Joan had native wit. Her being, simple-seeming, pushed forward complexes enough when it came to the touch. Aderhold marvelled to see her so skilful and wary, and still so quiet with it all that she seemed to act without motion, or with motion too swift for perception. She went unsuspected of all —

a tall, fair youth with grey eyes and a manner of reserve, brooding aside over some loss of his own.

Giles Allen, John Allen, George Dragon — it was George Dragon, Aderhold came to see, who furnished the danger point. — Humphrey Lantern was no artist to put forward a self complete, yet not your home and most familiar self. He had no considerable rôle to play; he was merely George Dragon, an old soldier of the Dutch Wars, who since had knocked about as best he might, and now would try his fortune in Virginia. He was at liberty to talk of the good wars and the Low Countries all he wished. He sought the forecastle and the company of the ruder sort and he talked of these. But he was forgetful, and at times the near past would trip up the far past. Never the very near past, but Aderhold had heard him let slip that for part time since the good wars, he had served as a gaoler — "head man in a good prison," he put it with a grim touch of pride. Aderhold thought that some one had given him usquebaugh to drink. When he cautioned him, as he earnestly did at the first chance, Lantern could not remember that he had said any such thing, but, being sober, he agreed that the least thing might be spark to gunpowder, and that their lives depended upon discretion. He promised and for some time Aderhold observed him exercising due caution. But the fear remained, and the knowledge that Lantern would drink if tempted, and drunken knew not what he said.

At first they had a favouring wind and seas not rough or over-smooth. The ship bore strongly on, and the spirits of most aboard were good. Now and then broke out revelry and boisterousness, but the men of weight kept rule among their followers, and Captain Hugh Bard would have order where he commanded. The wilder sort, of whom there were enough aboard, must content themselves with suppressed quarrels, secret gaming, a murmur of feverish and unstable talk and conjecture. There were those who, wherever they were, must have excitement to feed upon. Their daily life must be peppered with a liberal hand, heightened to a fevered and whirling motion with no line of advance. These were restless, and spread their restlessness upon the Silver Queen. But there was much stolidity aboard, and at first and for many days it counteracted.

The wind blew, the sails filled, they drove cheerily on. They came to the Canaries, on the old passage, then drove westward. Days passed, many days. They came to where they might begin to look for islands. And here a storm took them and carried them out of their reckoning, and here their luck fell away from them. The storm was outlasted, but after it there befell a calm. The wind failed, sank away until there was not a breath. Sullen and stubborn, the calm lasted, weary day after weary day. The sails hung lank, the water made not even a small lipping sound, the crowned woman at the prow stood full length and steady, staring at a glassy floor.

The sea was oil, the sky brazen, and the spirits flagged like the flagging sails. Day after day, day after day. . .

At dawn one morning Aderhold and Joan leaned against the rail and looked at the purple sea. It lay like a vast gem, moveless and hard. The folk upon the ship were still sleeping. The seamen aloft in the rigging or moving upon the decks troubled them not, hardly looked their way.

"If you held a feather before you," said Joan, "it would not move a hair's breadth! They are to pray for a wind to-day. Master Evans will pray — all aboard will pray. Is it chained somewhere, or idle or asleep, or locked in a chest, and will we turn the key that way?"

"Did you see or speak to George Dragon yesterday?"

"No. Why?"

"Some of these men brought *aqua vitæ* or usquebaugh aboard with them. He games for it and wins. And then his tongue wags more than it should."

"I did not know. . . . Danger, again?"

"Yes. He thinks he has done no harm, then is alarmed, penitent, protests that he will not — and then it's all done again. . . . Poor human weakness!"

"And if —?"

"We will not look at that now," said Aderhold. "It would unroll itself soon enough. — Joan, Joan! I would that you were safe!"

"I am safe. I would that you —"

"I will match your 'I am safe.' I, too, am safe. Nothing here can quench the eternal, flowing life! But until we have lifted this level and built more highly we shall feel its pains . . . and feel them for one another. And now I ache for your danger."

The east was carmine, the sea from purple turned carmine — carmine eastward from the Silver Queen to the horizon; elsewhere a burnished play of greens and blues, a vast plain, still, still! It flowed around and away to the burning horizon, and not a sail and not a breath, and no sound in the cordage overhead. The deepening light flowed between Joan and Aderhold, and in it, suddenly, the body of each was beautiful in the other's eyes. . . . The sun came up, a red-gold ball. Neither man nor woman had spoken, and now, suddenly, too, with the full dayspring, the ship was astir, men were upon the decks. Gilbert Aderhold, Joan Heron stepped back into the violet shadow; here were Giles and John Allen.

Up to these now came Master Evans, the minister bound for Jamestown, a stout, gentle-faced man in a sad-coloured suit. "Fast as though the ship were in the stocks!" he said. "But if the Lord is gracious, we will pray her free! Breakfast done, we will gather together and make hearty supplication." He looked across to the sun, mailed now in diamond, mounting blinding and fierce. The sweet coolness of the earlier hour was gone; wave on wave came heat, heat, heat! Master Evans clasped more closely the Bible in his hand. "Thou sun whom for Israel's sake the Lord

halted in thy course and held thee nailed fast above Gibeon! Dost thou think if He chooses now to veil thy face with cloud and to blow thy rays aside, thou canst prevent? And thou hot and moveless air, if He choose to drive thee against the stern of this ship and into the hollow of these sails, wilt thou make objection? Nay, verily! And why should He not choose? Here upon this ship are not infidels and heathen, but his own servants and sheep! Wherefore we will kneel and beseech Him, and perchance a miracle may fall like manna."

He looked smilingly about him, then, pressing his Bible closely, went on to other emigrants. . . . Later in the morning all upon the Silver Queen were drawn together to make petition for a prospering wind. All save the sick were there. Giles and John Allen stood with the others, knelt with the others. "Have we not a chronicle of Thy deeds," prayed Master Evans. "Didst Thou not make a dry road through an ocean for a chosen people? Didst Thou not, at the Tower of Babel, in one hour shake one language into all the tongues that are heard upon the earth? Didst Thou not enable Noah to bring into the Ark in pairs all the beasts of this whole earth? Didst Thou not turn a woman into a pillar of salt, and give powers of speech to an ass, and preserve three men unsinged in a fiery furnace? Didst Thou not direct the dew on the one night to moisten only the fleece of Gideon and not any of the earth besides, and on the next night to glisten over the face of the

earth, but to leave the fleece unmoistened? And are not we thy servants even as were Gideon and Lot and Noah? . . ."

The calm held. A sky of brass, an oily sea, heat and heat, and now more sickness, and now an uneasy whisper as to the store of water! The whisper grew, for the ship lay still, day after day, as though she had never moved nor ever would do so. Panic terror came and hovered near the Silver Queen. Captain Bard fell ill, lay in fever and delirium. . . . The mate took command — no second Captain Bard, but a frightened man himself. There was aboard a half-crazed fellow who began to talk of Ill-Luck. "The ship hath Ill-Luck. Who brought it aboard? Seek it out and tie it to the mast and shoot it with your arquebuse! Then, mayhap, the wind will blow." He laughed and mouthed of Ill-Luck, until crew and passengers all but saw a shadowy figure. Time crawled by, and the calm held and the panic grew.

There came an hour when the bolt fell, foreseen by Aderhold. Before it ran a whisper; then there fell a pause and an ominous quiet; then burst the voices, fast and thick. It was afternoon, the sun not far from the horizon, the sea red glass. Aderhold came up on deck from the captain's cabin. He looked about him and saw a crowd drawn together. Out of it issued a loud voice. "Ill-Luck? What marvel there is ill-luck?" Noise mounted. The half-crazed fellow suddenly began to shrill out, "Ill-Luck! Ill-

Luck! There she sits!" He burst from the throng and pointed with his finger. Away from the stir, on a great coil of rope near a slung boat, there sat, looking out to sea, John Allen.

The mate, with him several of the more authoritative adventurers and also Master Evans, came out of the state cabin. "What's all this? What has happened?"

A man of the wilder sort aboard, a ruffler and gamester, was pushed forward by the swarm. "My masters, there's one aboard named George Dragon who, being somewhat drunk, hath let drop news that we hold hath a bearing upon this ship's poor fortune! He saith that we carry escaped prisoners — runaways from the King's justice — rebels, too, to religion —"

"Ill Luck! Ill Luck! There sits Ill Luck!" cried the half-crazed one, and pointed again.

The swarm began to speak with a general voice. "And we say that we won't get a wind, but will lie here until water is gone and we die of thirst and rot and sink. . . . If we've got men aboard who are bringing misfortune on us. . . . Twelve days lying here and not a breath! The captain ill and twenty men besides, and the water low. . . . There's Scripture for it. . . . What's the good of praying for a wind, if all the time we're harbouring his foes? . . . Held here, as though we were nailed to the sea floor, and the water low! The ship's cursed. . . . We want George Dragon made to tell their names —"

Suddenly George Dragon himself was among them — red-faced and wry-mouthed, but to-day thick-tongued also and stumbling. He looked about him wildly. "What's all this chattering? Talking like monkeys! — Waked me up — but I won and he paid — good stuff —" He saw Aderhold and lurched toward him. When he was near he spoke and imagined that none else could hear him. "Don't look so grimly upon me, Master Aderhold!" he said. "I've dropped not a word, as I told you I would n't. 'Zooks! I'm not one to peach —"

Aderhold! With one sharp sound the name ran through the swarm. "Not Allen! — *Aderhold. . . .*" There were those here from that port town and the surrounding country, — those who had heard that name before. A man cried out, "Aderhold! That was the sorcerer who was to be burned!" Another: "They escaped — The sorcerer and apostate and the witch Joan Heron —"

"Ill Luck! Ill Luck!" cried the Bedlamite. "There she stands!"

John Allen had risen from the coil of rope and stood against the slung boat. The throng swung its body that way, hung suspended one long moment, open-mouthed, wide-eyed, then with a roaring cry flung itself across the space between. Aderhold reached her side, but the throng came, too, hurled him down and laid hands upon her. One clutched her shirt and jerkin and tore them across. She stood a woman revealed.

"The witch! The witch!" they roared and struck her to the deck.

The mate was not the man that was the captain, but he knew what the captain would do, and where he was able he copied. The few superior colonists were not superior to witch-fear, but they had a preference for orderly judgement and execution. Master Evans was of a timid and gentle nature and abhorred with his bodily eyes to see violence done. He believed devoutly that in the interests of holiness witches, infidels, and sorcerers must be put to death, but he would not willingly himself behold the act which his religion approved. There were others aboard amenable to discipline, and bold enough to escape panic over mere delay. The sorcerer and the witch were drawn from the hands of the more enraged. Their arms were bound across; they were thrust into the ship's dungeon. With them went Humphrey Lantern, sober enough now — poor wry-mouthed man! . . . In the state cabin there was held a council. "Keep the wretches close under hatches until Virginia is reached," said the cooler sense. "Then let the officers of the settlement hang them, on dry land and after solemn judgement. Or let them be prisoned in Jamestown until a ship is sailing home, taken back to England, and hanged there. If, as may well be the case, the Silver Queen hath been cursed for their sakes, surely now that they are ironed there below, and their doom certain in the end, the Almighty will lift the curse! At least, wait

and see if the calm be not broken." Within the cabin and without were malcontents, but the soberer counsel prevailed. The mate agreed to keep the crew from mutiny, the moderate-minded adventurers to tame the wilder, more frightened and impatient spirits. . . . That very night the calm vanished.

The calm vanished in a wild uprush of clouds and stir of the elements. The heat and savour of brass, the stillness of death, the amazing blue of the sky, the splashed red of sunrise and sunset went away. In their place came darkness and a roaring wind. At first they went under much canvas; it was a drunken delight to feel the spray, to see the crowned woman drink the foam, to hear the whistling and the creaking, to know motion again. But presently they took in canvas. . . . Twenty-four hours after the first hot puff of air, they were being pushed, bare-masted, as by a giant's hand over a sea that ran in mountains. The sky was black-purple, torn by lightnings, the rain fell with a hissing fury, the wind howled now, howled too loudly!

As the calm would not break, so now the storm would not break. It roared and howled and the water curved and broke over the decks of the Silver Queen. A mast went, the ship listed, there arose a cry. The rain and lightning and thunder ceased, but never the wind and the furious sea and the darkened sky. The Silver Queen was beaten from wave to wave, now smothered in the hollow, now rising dizzily to the moving summit. The waves combed over

her, they struck her as with hammers, her seamen cried out that there was sprung a leak, it came to be seen that she might not live. The panic of the calm gave way to that of the storm.

And now they cried out wildly that the voyage was cursed, and that God Almighty who had plagued Israel for Achan's sin was plaguing them for that they kept aboard most vile offenders and rebels such as these! Those that were still for delay kept quarter yet a little longer, but while the wind somewhat lessened, the leak gained, and panic attacked them too. The captain lay ill and out of his head, the mate was no stronger than they who wished clearance made. In a black and wild morning, the livid sky dragging toward them, the sea running high, they lowered a boat and placed in it Aderhold and Joan and Humphrey Lantern. They might, perhaps, have held the last with them, carrying him in irons to Virginia, but when he found what was toward he cursed them so horribly that no wizard could have thought of worse imprecations. They shivered and thrust him into the boat, where he knelt and continued his raving. "Hush!" said Aderhold. "Let us die quietly."

The sailors loosed the small boat and pushed it outward from the Silver Queen. It fell astern, the black water widened between. The ship, mad to get on, to put distance between her and the curse, flung out what sail the tempest would let her carry. It made but a slight pinion, but yet wing enough to

take her from that speck upon the ocean, the boat she had set adrift. . . . Not she had set adrift, but Ignorance, Fear and Superstition, their compound, Cruelty, and their blind Prætorian, Brute Use of Brute Force. There had been one pale ray of something else. Master Evans had insisted that there be put in the boat a small cask of water and a portion of ship's bread.

The Silver Queen hurried, hurried over the wild and heaving sea, beneath a low sky as grey as iron. The many gazing still lost at last all sight of the open boat. It faded into the moving air, or it was drawn into the sea, they knew not which. But it was gone, and they made bold to hope that now God would cease to plague them.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE OPEN BOAT

THAT day and night they in the open boat merely lived to die. With each wave of a sea yet in storm Death overhung them, the foam atop gleaming down like a white skull. The boat rode that wave, and then Death rose on another. There seemed naught to do in life but to meet Death — a little candle left to go forth by. Death preoccupied them — it was so wide and massive, it came against them in such tourney shocks. "Now . . . No! — Then now . . ." But still the boat lived and the candle burned. When the dawn broke the waves were seen to be lessening in might.

That day the sea went down and the sky cleared. Sea and sky turned a marvel of blue, Indian, wondrous. There was a wind, steadily and quietly blowing, but it served them not who had no sail. All around — all around the intense sea spread to the horizon, and no sail showed and no land. The sun mounted and for all the moving air they felt its heat which increased. Heat and light — light — light. . . .

The cask of water. . . . They found beside it a small drinking-cup of horn, and they agreed that each should drink this once filled each day. It was little,

but so they might keep Death at bay so many days. They also portioned out the ship's bread. Likewise they watched for a sail. They were now in seas where ships might be looked for; west and south must lie the islands held by Spain. Once two sea-birds flew past them, and that would mean that land was not inconceivably far away. But they saw no land, and no sail was etched against the sapphire sky. Loneliness profound, and heat and light. . . .

All was done that could be done to preserve life. It remained to live it. . . . But poor Humphrey Lantern, whom the other two tried to comfort, would not be comforted. He sat and bit his nails, full of remorse and horror, then passed through stages of anger to a melancholy, and thence to a dull indifference, silence, and abstraction. They could not rouse him. Aderhold spoke in vain of the Low Countries and the wars, and of all the good that they owed him, and of how they might yet live to remember these days not unkindly. Lantern, huddled in the bottom of the boat, looked at them blankly. His abused body sank more quickly than did theirs. . . . He had a knife, and at last one night, when they had been drifting long days and nights, he struck it into his heart. The body, swaying against Aderhold, roused him from uneasy sleep. His exclamation waked Joan; she put out her hand and raised it wet with blood. A moon so great and shining lit the night that they could see well enough what had been done. Lantern was dead. They laid him straight in the

bottom of the boat. Aderhold drew out and washed the knife, and then they sat beside the dead man until the moon paled in the vast rose-flush of dawn. Then, while sea and sky were so beauteous, they lifted the body; then, while they looked to the brightening east, let it leave their hands for the great deep. Wind and current bore the boat slowly onward and away. The two were now so weak that they lay still as after great and prolonged exertion.

The day burned to its height, flamed to its close. There came a sunset of supernal beauty, and then the pitying, brief twilight and the glory of the southern night. The coolness gave a little strength. Aderhold set the cup to the mouth of the cask and poured for each a shallow draught of water. They should not have drunk till morning, for their store was nearly gone. But with one mind they took this, to give them voice, to free them for a little from gross pain. When it was done they turned each to the other, came each to the other's arms.

Another dawn — the furnace of the day—sunset — the night. The wheel went round and they, bound to it, came again to dawn and then to strong light and heat. When they had drunk this morning, there remained of the water but one cupful more. They lay, hand clasping hand, in the bottom of the boat that now drifted on a waveless sea. Sometimes they murmured to each other, but for the most part they lay silent. There was now no outward beauty in the two. They lay withered, scorched, fleshless,

half-naked, human life at last gasp between the ocean and the sky. Within, all strength and beauty could summon only negatives. They did not complain, they did not curse, they did not despair, they did not hate. Within was a stillness as of a desert, with a low wind of life moving over it. The physical could not lift far into emotion, but what there was was love and pity. Emotion could hardly attain to thought, nor thought to intuition, but what there was knew still the splendour and terror and all things that we are. Day — eve — the night — the dawn — day. They measured out the last water in the cask and shared it justly between them. They lay side by side, his hand upon her breast, her hand upon his. The fierce heat, the fierce sunlight rose and reigned. . . .

A crazy, undecked sailboat came out of the haze. It was returning from a great island south to a group of small islands lying northerly in these seas, and it held five or six Indians — not the fiercer, southern Caribs, but mild Lucayans. One spied a dot upon the waters and pointed it out. They drew slowly nearer in a light wind, and when they saw that it was a boat adrift, tacked and came up with it. A man leaned overboard, seized and drew it in, and with a rope fastened it to the stern of the larger craft. Uttering exclamations, they examined their prize. In the bottom of the boat lay a man and a woman in man's dress. They lay unconscious, wreathed in each other's arms, two parched and gaunt creatures

who had suffered the extremity of exposure, hunger, and thirst. The Indians thought that they were dead, and, indeed, they looked like death and terrible death. But when they were lifted and dragged into the larger boat, and when water was put between their blackened and shrivelled lips, there came a faint stir and a moaning breath. . . . The Indians had good store of water in cask and calabash; they gave it again from time to time, and they crumbled cassava bread and fed that too. . . . Joan and Aderhold turned back to the land of the living.

At first the Indians thought that they were Spanish, for they had no association with other white men. Association with the Spaniard had been cruel enough for them; they belonged to the disappearing remnant of a people swept by the thousands from their islands to the larger islands, enslaved, oppressed, extirpated. These in the boat were runaways from a hard master, who had stolen this boat and put out, crazy as it was, on what might seem a hopeless voyage. Did they pass through days and nights, and leagues and leagues of sea and go uncaptured by some Spanish craft, did they come at last to their own island, what would they find there? A desert, with, perhaps, a tiny cluster of palm-thatched huts, still clinging, looking for some landing party, looking to be swept away as had been their kith and kin — a perishing group, dejection, languor of life. . . . But homesickness drove them on; better a

death-bed with freedom than the peopled great island where they were slaves! They had felt the Spanish lash and the Spanish irons; they looked doubtfully enough upon the white man and woman, and it was perhaps a question whether now they would not pay back. . . . But when at last Aderhold spoke, it was in English. They did not know that tongue and they answered in altered and distorted Spanish. He had a little Spanish, and he made them understand briefly that the two had been in an English ship and that there had been a storm and that they were castaways. They were not Spanish, and they did not know the great island or any of the masters. They were English, whom the Spanish hated. That fact being weighed, the Indians turned friendly, laughed and stroked their hands in token of amity, then set apart for the two a great calabash of water, and gave them more cassava bread.

Joan and Aderhold ate and drank. The will to live was strong, for life had turned a rainbow, and a wild and beautiful forest, and a song of the high and the deep, and an intense pulsation. The two came swiftly up from Death's threshold. Before the boat came into sight of land the light was back in their sunken eyes and some strength in their frame. . . . The land seemed a low, island shore. The excited Indians gesticulated, spoke in their own tongue. Aderhold, questioning them, learned that it was the outermost of their island group, but not their own island to which they were bound. They saw pale

sand and verdure green as emerald; then the night came and covered all from sight. No light of torch or of cooking-fire pierced the darkness. The blank shores slipped past, the boat left them astern, and now again all around was the sea. . . . But though it was night there was no sleeping. The returning exiles were excited, restless, garrulous. The two learned that there were many islands and now almost no people. The people — the Indians beat their breasts — were gone now, almost all gone. For the masters sent men from the great islands to burn the villages and take the men and women and children and drive them aboard ships and carry them off to make poor slaves of them. They had done so when the oldest men were children, and when the oldest men's fathers were children. But now the masters did not come, for the men and women and children were all gone — all gone but a few, a few. The returned from long slavery did not know if these few were yet there, yet clinging to their island.

Night passed, dawn came, the wind blew them on. Now they saw islets and islands, but no craft upon the water, or sign of life. Then, in the afternoon, the Indians' lode-star lifted upon the horizon. They put their helm for it, a freshening wind filled their sail. Presently they saw it clear, a low island, here ivory white and here green as emerald. The Indians shouted and wept. They caressed one another in their own tongue, they gesticulated, they held out their arms to the nearing shore.

The shore dilated. Reefs appeared to be warily avoided, and the water grew unearthly blue and clear. Green plumes of palm seemed to wave and beckon. Back from the narrow ivory beach, inland out of a break in the belt of green, rose a feather of smoke. The Indians when they saw it were as mad people. They leaped to their feet, they embraced one another, they laughed, they strained their bodies toward the land, and broke into a savage chant of home-coming. . . . Now they were in a tortuous channel between *cays* and the island. The island beach widened, and now human forms appeared — not many, and at first with a hesitant and fearful air; then, as they became assured that here was only one small sailboat, with a bolder advance, until at last they came down to the edge of the small bight to which the boat was heading. They were Indians like those in the boat, a mild and placable strain, dulled and weakened by the century-old huge wrong done them. They were but a handful. In the whole island there was now but one small village.

The boat glided past a fanged reef and came into a tiny crystal anchorage where the bright fish played below like coloured birds in the air. They lowered sail; they came as close as might be to the shelving land; the Indians leaped into the water and made ashore with loud cries and incoherent words. The islanders swept about them, surrounded them; there rose a wild, emotional questioning and greeting, laughing and crying.

The infection spread to Joan and Aderhold. Behind them lay pain and horror, and pain and horror might again claim them. But now Time had spread for them a mighty reaction. It was so blessed to be alive! — they were so prepared to embrace and love life — every material thing seemed so transfused and brightly lit from within — they laughed themselves and felt in their eyes the happy dew. . . . They, too, must take to the water to come ashore. It was naught to them, the shallow bright flood. They crossed it as had done the Indians, and stepped upon the land.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ISLAND

A FEW miles in length, fewer in breadth, the island lay in a sub-tropic clime. During its winter all the air was neither cold nor hot, but of a happy in-between and suave perfection. Its summer brought strong heat and at times wild tempests of rain and wind, thunder and lightning. For the most part the land rose but a little way above the sea, a shallow soil with a coral base. Out of this mould sprang a forest of eternal greenness. Once there had been a number of villages, each in its small clearing, but one by one they had been destroyed and the clearings had gone back to the forest.

This one larger village had outlasted. Dwindling year by year, before it, at no great term, death and absorption, when all the island would be desert, it yet showed a number of irregularly placed, circular huts woven of branch and reed and thatched with palm. To this village Joan and Aderhold were swept together with the escaped slaves, the returned exiles. Besides the tenanted huts there were others from which the last of the occupants had died, but which were not yet fallen to the earth and become a part of the forest floor. Joan and Aderhold were given one of these abodes standing under tamarind

and palm, and here food was brought them. All the village was in commotion, restless and excited, for seldom and most seldom in all the years did any one come back. . . . When night fell there ensued feasting and revelry, a strange picture-dance, performed by men and women, long recitatives wherein some sonorous voice told of this people's woes, of their palmy days, and how the white men came in the time of their fathers, and they took them for gods and they proved themselves not so — not gods but devils! The torrent expression of wrongs flowed on. Sharp cries and wailings came from the dusky figures seated in an ellipse about the narrator. Eyes looked angrily across to where the white man and woman sat and watched.

Among the Indians of the sailboat had been an old man with a finer, more intelligent face than was to be found among his fellows. It was he, principally, who had talked with the castaways. Now, on land, he constituted himself their advocate and protector. He had been, it seemed, the chief man of a vanished village, and this present village, being without a strong man, looked to him with deference. Now he rose and spoke and the threatening looks faded. These Indians were not of a fierce and cruel temper — and the two strangers were not Spanish, but came from a tribe whom the Spanish fought. . . . Danger to the two from their hosts or captors passed away.

The night went by in noise and feasting. With the dawn the village sank into sleep. The home-coming

ones needed, after long adventure and strain, rest and repose, while the friends and kindred at home were used to swift and calm descendings to immobility and profound sleep. Within and without the tent-like huts lay the dusky, well-shaped forms, almost bare, still as death, lying as though they had been shot down by invisible arrows. The projecting palm thatch, the overhanging, thick foliage, kept out the fierce sun, made a green and brown gloom.

Joan and Aderhold slept, too. For them the immediate need was health again, strength again, energy in which to base the wonderful flower of life. They lay like children near each other, and slept the livelong day. When, in the last bright light, they waked, there was cassava bread, and tropic fruit and water from a neighbouring spring. They ate and drank and talked a little, about indifferent things — only nothing now was indifferent, but rich and significant. But it was as though they would hold away from them for a little while their deeper bliss; would not speak of that until they could speak in health, with glow and vigour and beauty and power! About them the village half waked, half slept. They heard women's and children's voices, but dreamily. The woods, that had been very still during the heat of the day, were now as murmurous as rapids of a stream. All manner of winged life made a continuous sound. Joan and Aderhold rested their heads again upon the woven palm mat and slept the deep night through.

With the second morning the Indian village resumed its normal process of existing. The women practised a kind of embryonic agriculture. The men hunted not at all, though they trapped birds; but they fished, pushing out into the turquoise sea in canoes hollowed from tree-trunks. The women plaited baskets, and cut and dried gourds large and small. They had cotton, and they knew how to weave it into the scant clothing needed in such a clime. They scraped the cassava root into meal and made bread, and gathered and brought in the staple fruits. In the village were to be found in some slight number and variety matters not of savage make. During the more than a hundred years since the great Genoese and his Spanish sailors had come upon this group, such things had drifted here, as it were, upon the tide and the winds. Thus there were to be seen several cutlasses and daggers, together with a rusted Andrea Ferrara, a great iron pot, and smaller utensils, a sea-chest, a broken compass, a Spanish short mantle and hat and feather, some piece of furnishing from a church, a drinking-cup, a length of iron chain. But nothing had been left, or had been traded for with Indians of other villages, for a long, long time. The islands were desert and forgotten . . . except that now of late sea-robbers and pirates were, for that very reason, taking as anchorage, refuges, and bases of operation, the intricate channels and well-concealed harbours. But no pirate ship had found as yet this inward-lying island. It

rested upon the sea as if forgotten or lost or inaccessible, and its fading people knew at least a still and not ungentle autumn.

The old Indian came this morning to visit Aderhold and Joan. Others had been before him; they had held, perforce, a kind of levee. The children were not more curious, nor simpler in their expression of curiosity, than were the men and women. They had no language in common with the castaways but that of gesture, but they made this answer. The torn, sun-faded clothing of the two, the fineness and tint of their hair, the colour of their skin, Joan's grey eyes, the absurd sound of their speech at which the Indians laughed heartily — every physical trait was of interest. But as with children attention went little further than that and was quick to flag. The levee dispersed.

But the old man's interest went beyond eyes and hair and a fair skin. He could speak in Spanish, too, and Aderhold could answer. He was as curious as the others, but his curiosity had a wider mental range. The strangers' country and its nature — their rank there — why they left it — had their ship utterly perished in the hurricane — these and other questions he asked, with his fine, old, chieftain, shrewd, not unhumorous face. Aderhold answered with as much frankness as was possible. The old chief listened, nodded, said briefly that he had heard men in the great island speak of those other white men, the English, and how they fought like devils. "But

devils' devil not what I call devil," said the chief. "Devils' god what I call devil."

He wished to know if the English were not coming to fight the Spanish, and his eyes lit up. "Then come rest here. Englishmen would n't stamp foot upon us — eh?" He observed that the hut was old and falling down. "Not good place. Too much tree — too much other houses all around. I like place see the water — night and morning. Sit and think, think where it ends." He offered to have them a house built. "Do it in one day. When you like it you look, say where."

Presently he gazed at them thoughtfully, and held up two fingers. "Sister and brother?"

"No, not sister and brother. We are lovers."

"Ah, ah!" said the old chief. "I thought that, yonder in the boat. — What is her name — and your name?"

"Joan — and Gilbert."

The old man said them over, twice and thrice, pleased at mastering the strange sounds. "Joan — Gilbert. Joan — Gilbert." At last he went away, but that was the beginning of a long and staunch friendship.

The day passed, the night. Another day dawned and ran onward to an afternoon marvellously fair. The season of hurricanes and great heat was passing; the air was growing temperate, life-giving. This day had been jewel-clear, with a tonic, blowing wind, strong and warm. The narrow shore-line of wave-

worn rock and coralline sand lay only a little way from the village. In the latter occurred a continual, sleepy oscillation of its particles, talk and encounter, and privacy had not been invented. Joan and Aderhold, fairly as strong now as on that night when with Gervaise and Lantern they broke prison, went this afternoon down to the sea.

It stretched before them, the great matrix from which the life of the land had broken, the ancient habitat. They left the village behind; a point of woodland came between them and it. Now there was only the ocean, the narrow shore, the lift of palms and many another tropic tree, and the arch of the deep blue sky. The tide was coming in. They sat upon a ledge of coral rock and watched it. The water, beyond the foam of the breaking rollers, seemed of an intenser hue than the sky itself — and calm, calm — with never a sail, never a sail.

"We may live here and die here — an old man and woman," said Joan: "die together."

"I am thirty-four years old," said Aderhold. "I will have to die before you."

"No. I will die a little sooner than I might."

"No! I will grow younger —"

"We talk nonsense," said Joan. "We sit here, as young and as old each as the other! And we shall die together."

A wave broke at their feet with a hollow sound. It fell on her last word, and it seemed to repeat it with a sullen depth, *Together*. It came to both that they

were to have died together, there in England, and that if ever they were retaken, as the great strangeness of life might permit, then certainly in all probability they would die together. That was one way in which the granting of their wish might be taken as assured. . . . But they saw no sail, and they saw that now the village never looked for a sail. . . . Safety might, indeed, have come to dwell with them. The thought of omen faded out.

The wind blew around them warm and strong. It was full tide, and about them foam and pearl, and the voice of mother sea. They sat with clasped hands on their coral ledge. It was coming back to them — it had come back to them — health and glow and colour and spring. Joan was fairer than she had been in Heron's cottage. First youth, youth of the senses, youth controlled and well-guided, but youth, revived like the phœnix in Aderhold the scholar. He had seemed graver and older than he truly was. In him strength, activity, adventure, interest, will, and daring had early risen into the realm of the mind. There they had bourgeoned, pressed on, been light of step and high of heart. But the outward man had not been able to keep pace. Now a deep passion changed that. He looked as young as Joan; both looked immortal youth. Each put hands upon the other's shoulders, they drew together, they kissed. The voice of the ocean, and of the wind and of the forest spoke for them, and their own hearts spoke.

The next day, when the old chief visited them, they went back to his proposal of a new house. The idea found him ready as a child. It was among his traits to be easily fired with the joy of building. He would speak to the chief men and the young men, and they would tell the women to do it at once. Where would Joan and Gilbert — he produced the names with pride — have it built?

They took him with them and showed him. Just without the village, so near that they could hear its murmur, yet so far that there was not oppression, in a rich grove, opening to a bit of sandy shore and a wide view of the azure sea. . . . The old chief gazed with appreciation, nodded, "Good! Go talk to chief men now." So much a man of his word was he that the next day saw the women bringing bundles of reeds and palm leaves for the thatching. Also young trees were cut for the posts. Aderhold and Joan studied the method, saw how they might extend, add a shed-like room or two, make a gallery for working under shade. The old chief and the others, too, from the great island, had ideas. The village was in a gay, a stimulated mood. It was a gala month — not every other day, nor any other day, did captive tribesmen come back, or castaways appear that were not Spanish, human driftwood making human interest! They built for the two from far away so large and good a house that they themselves marvelled at it. "Houses like that" — a woman said to Joan — "in houses like that our fathers live, eating bread

with the Great Spirit!" When the house was done, the village feasted, and an Indian, rising, addressed the castaways and said that now they were members and an adopted man and woman of the tribe, and that the village expected much good from them. "We show you how we do — you show us how your people do — show us how to kill Spaniards when they come!"

The next day Joan and Aderhold took possession of their house. When the crowd who had accompanied them to it was gone, and when the old chief was gone, and when there came the evening stir and murmur from the village, the two built their fire, and Joan made cakes of cassava bread and Aderhold brought water from a little spring that was their own. They had gold and russet fruit, and they sat and ate before their own door and were content. It was a bright and lovely evening, with a light upon the sea and the palm fronds slowly swinging. The voice of the village came not harshly, but with a certain mellow humming, and the voice of the sea upon the reef came not harshly either. When the meal was finished, they covered the embers of their fire so that it should not go out, then rose from their knees and hand in hand went the round of their domain. Here they would make a garden, here they would bring the water to a trough nearer the hut. Back at the doorway they looked within and saw their house fair and clean, yet fragrant of the green wood, with store of primitive household matters, with the sleeping-mats

spread. They turned and saw the great sea and the sky wide and deep. The evening wind, too, had arisen and caressed them, blowing richly and strongly. A tall palm tree rose from clean white sand. They sat beneath this while the stars came shining forth, and that of which they spoke was Love.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FOUR YEARS

No Spaniards came to be driven back, had Aderhold been that magician who could do it. It was like a lost island, or the first peopled island, or the last. Day after day they watched a tranquil sea and saw no point of any sail. Time passed. The Indians from the great island ceased to dream of recapture. Joan and Aderhold ceased to dream of being taken, wrenched apart; ceased to dream of the open boat and of the Silver Queen and of the prison and the gallows field. They did not cease to dream of Hawthorn, of Heron's Cottage and the Oak Grange, of Hawthorn Forest, and all the life that lay on yonder side the prison gates. Joan dreamed of her father and of her uncle the huntsman, of the castle and Mistress Borrow and others there, the town as once it had been to her, and of Hawthorn as once it had been. She dreamed of Heron's cottage — of every item there — the well under the fruit trees, the bees under the thatch, the daffodils and every later flower, of her kitchen and the hearth and the old settle, and her spinning-wheel. She dreamed of gathering faggots in Hawthorn Forest. She dreamed of Alison and of Will the smith's son and of Goodman Cole and of many another — the vintner in the

town, Cecily Lukin and the forester's wife, old Master Hardwick — many another. But all were blended together in a dream world, in a gay and bright picture-book, where if there were witches they were harmless good souls who rather helped people than otherwise, and where no one was persecuted for thinking things out for one's self. In the picture book it seemed almost a laudable thing to do. Aderhold dreamed — and his dream world was wider by his greater range of this life's experience. He dreamed of Hawthorn and Hawthorn Forest and all the roads thereabouts, of the Oak Grange and of Heron's cottage; but he dreamed likewise of a world beyond Hawthorn. He dreamed of his own childhood and boyhood, and they, too, had a picture-book setting, where the rough became only rich and varied, and what had seemed sorrow and harm turned an unhurt side. He dreamed of his first manhood, and of his search for knowledge, the sacred hunger and thirst and the lamp of aspiration in his hand. He dreamed of old woes and scars, happenings many an one, persons many an one. . . . But neither he nor Joan dreamed any more, with a frightful sense of nearness, with a cold start of waking, of sudden, clutching hands, of separation, of dark and deep gaols where neither could hear the other's voice, or if the other's voice was heard, indeed, then heard in a long cry of anguish. Fear spread its dark wings and left them, and took with it intensity of watchfulness and all the floating motes that made its court.

They had now great strength and health, Joan's renewed, Aderhold's such as it had never been. They stood erect and bright-eyed, their movements had rhythm, the hand went with precision to its task, the glance fell unerringly, the foot bore them lightly. They bent to life with a smile, frequently with laughter. If life was always a mighty riddle, if at times it seemed a vivid disaster, yet indubitably there were stretches, as now, when it became a splendid possession!

"'I have heard talk of bold Robin Hood,
And of brave Little John,
Of Friar Tuck and Will Scarlett,
Locksley and Maid Marian —'"

sang Joan. She wove as she sang, for there was cotton for weaving, and she had learned of the Indian women and greatly bettered their instruction. She saw garments for them both, hanging from the pegs, lying upon the shelves Aderhold had made. She had traded her skill at many things for needles of bone, for the vegetable dyes that the women used, for various matters that she wanted. She was of all women most fit for such a return to a younger world. Sane and strong and skilled, with the artist arisen from the mere workwoman, she turned back some thousand years, and handled savage life with a creative hand. On all sides latent power came forth. A wise trader, she gathered what she needed; a good teacher, she imparted knowledge as she went, without ostentation, insensibly, with a fine unconscious-

ness; a worker of the best, she did that which her hand found to do with *élan* and precision and an assured result upon which to base further results. She lacked not for leisure either, nor for a whimsical, sceptical glance upon her own labours, nor for an ability to let it all slip aside while she sat and brooded upon the open sea.

As for Aderhold, he was and was not the man of the Oak Grange. He was that man freed where he had been bound, fed where he had been starved.

Their domain grew in fitness and beauty. By the time the perfect winter had passed into the languors of spring, and spring into the heats and rains of summer, and summer again into cooler, fairer days, they had achieved about them an Arcadian right simplicity, as far from meagreness as from excess. The large hut, palm-thatched, stood in a well-stocked garden. Great trees gave them shade; a spring of clear water for ever a cooling, trickling sound. Around all they planted a flowering hedge. Within this round sounded the hum of their industries and their own clear voices. Without was the eternal voice of the sea, and in and out and around, the voice of the moving air.

The murmur of the Indian village was likewise there, but it did not come athwart; it travelled equably with the other sounds. They had come to have a fondness for the dwindling village, an affection for this remnant of a remnant of a people. They were poor savages, they had flaws and vices,

but save that they were less complex, less intertwined with later offshoots, more plain stalk and plain word, their flaws and vices differed in no great wise from those that might be viewed in France or England. At times the village seemed like a village of children, and then again it might seem very old and somewhat wise. Once or twice they had seen it waver toward a village of beasts, heavily swaying toward the animal only. But Aderhold had seen that happen in France and Italy—they might both think that they had seen it happen in England. On the very morrow it was something more than animal. At times it was something much more — something much higher. And they knew that flaws and vices lurked in themselves also — unplucked-out weeds yet living a slow dark life in the backward-reaching abyss. They understood the village, and they tried to help. They did help, and by slow degrees the village came to change affection with them. As for the old chief, every other day he came to see them.

He was of an enquiring and speculative turn of mind, and it was his wont to bring unsolved questions to the vine-shaded strip of bare earth before the hut, and there, seated on a mat with a few followers squatted around, propound them to the two. To most of the islanders all things, outside the narrowest range, were supernatural. The old man's scope was wider, and the daring of his scepticism, proportioned to his environment, would have qualified him for a dungeon in most countries that Ader-

hold knew. . . . Here upon this island all was as a sketch, a faint model and portent only of what, in seventeenth-century Europe, had become enlarged, filled in and solid. Generically it was the same; it was but a question of degree of intensity and of accretions. These Indians also held for an external deity, so extruded, so external that steps — that intermediaries — must be extruded to cover the extruded space between, to reach the extruded Ear and Mind. Moreover, they did not maintain this a flowing process, but continually let the extrusions of remote ancestors dam the stream. They had idols whom certainly not even the old chief might with impunity criticize. They had "Thou shalts" and "Thou shalt nots" which were wise and might long remain so, and those which had been wise and were now meaningless, colourless, making neither for much good nor much harm, and those which might once have been wise but were now hurtful, and those which never had been wise and grew in folly. They had notions, dim, not as yet fearfully positive, of a future life of reward or punishment, where they would do without limit or term — throughout eternity, indeed — that which, Indians upon this island, they most liked to do in this present moment, or would suffer, alike for ever, just those pains which at present they acutely disliked. They placed great merit in belief without question, obedience without discrimination, and a prostrate attitude. They had extruded Authority. Nothing had a proper motion of

its own, but everything was moved by something else. The disclaimer of responsibility, of generic lot and part, was general. The disinclination to examine premises was supreme. They had found their despot in Inertia.

But the old chief was exceptional. He was wary and paid respect to taboos. That done, he loved to talk. He brought to Aderhold questions such as, at the dawn of philosophy, an intelligent barbarian might have put to Thales or Anaximander. Aderhold answered as simply and well as he might; where he could not answer, said so. Now and then the more active-minded of the old man's escort brought queries. Joan also listened and questioned. Aderhold, answering, taught in terms of natural science and a general ethic — very simply, for that, here, was the only way. . . .

But when the old chief and his followers had gone away from the vine-clad porch, and the murmur of the village came faintly across the evening, when, their day's labour done, they went down to the sea, to the coral ledge or crescent of pale sand, and lay there by the blue, unending water; or when, night having fallen, they rested in the moonlight on the black-and-white chequered ground beneath the palms, they spoke more fully, shared more completely the inner worlds. Love could not rest with them in the physical. Freedom, dilation, redoubling, rapid and powerful vibration, energy, colour, music, all mounted from the denser to the rarer uni-

verse. Their minds interfused, there came moments when their spirits might seem one iridescent orb. They were one, . . . only the next instant to be exquisitely different . . . then to approach and blend again. At such times they spoke in low tones, with slow, rounded words, of the deepest waters where their souls drank of which they had knowledge, or they spoke not at all, having no need to. . . . At other times they talked of the past and the future and the whole round world. Steadily they learned of each other: Joan much from Aderhold, Aderhold much from Joan.

They had lived here a year — they had lived here more than a year. When they had lived here two years, when they, no more than the Indians about them, watched the horizon for any ship, when they had ceased to dream of separation, change, and disaster, when it was fully home, with the sweetness and fragrance of home — then was born their child.

Joan lay upon the clean, woven mats in the bright moonlight. Aderhold put the babe in her arms, then stretched himself beside them. Her grey eyes opened upon him. "Gilbert — Gilbert — I love you so —"

"I love you so —"

She took his hand and guided it with hers until it rested upon the child, wrapped in cloth which she had woven. "Life from life and added unto life," she said. "Love from love and added unto love."

The child was a woman child, and they named her Hope. She grew and thrived and they had great joy

in her. When the old chief came to see her, he held her in his hands and gave her a musical name of his own. They translated it, Bird-with-Wide-Wings. Henceforward now they called her by this Indian name and now they called her Hope. The old chief grew fond of her, came oftener than ever, would sit in sun or shade quite still and content beside the cotton hammock in which she swung. The days went by, the weeks, the months, and she continued to thrive. She had Joan's grey eyes, but save for this she was liker Aderhold. She lay regarding them, or laughed when they came toward her, or put out a small hand to touch them; she was happy and well, and they were glad, glad that she was on earth.

The hot season came and the rains, and in August heavy storms. Trees were levelled and the frail huts of the village suffered. The sea came high upon the land and the rain fell in sheets. In the dim hut with the door fast closed, Aderhold and Joan and the babe rested in security. The babe slept; the two lay and listened to the fury without.

"There comes into my mind," said Joan, "the black sky and the dead air and the lightning and thunder that Sunday in Hawthorn Church."

"It came to me then, too," answered Aderhold. "Some finger in this storm strikes the key."

There was a silence. Both saw Hawthorn Church again and the congregation, and Master Clement in the pulpit. Both felt again the darkness of that storm, the oppression and the sense of catastrophe.

In mind again each, the remembered bolt having fallen, left the church and took the homeward road. Joan hurried once more over the sighing grass, past the swaying trees, saw Heron's cottage and the breaking storm. Aderhold passed again through Hawthorn Forest and crossed the stream before the Oak Grange, reached again the fairy oak and the Grange. He was again in Dorothy's kitchen, stooping over the fire — in his old room with his unfinished book beneath his hand — upon the stairs — the door was opening — the men to take him. . . . The blast without the hut changed key. The babe woke, and Joan, lifting her, moved to and fro. When she was hushed and sleeping, the strong echo, the returned emotion had disappeared. They kept silence for a little, and then they talked, not of old things but of the island, of their trees and garden and harm from the hurricane that must be repaired, and then of the village and the children of the village. They were beginning now to teach these.

The storm passed and other storms. There came around again the days of balm, the perfect weather. The child Hope was a year old. Their joy in her was great, indeed. For themselves, they were husband and wife, lovers, friends, fellow scholars, fellow workers, playmates. Their friendship with the Indians was stronger by a year, their service stronger. The old chief came often and often, and the child crowed and laughed and clapped her hands to see him.

The balmy days, the perfect weather passed, and

the spring passed. Summer again with its heats and rains was here. With the first great storm, in the hut with the door fast closed, shutting out the swaying and the wind and the hot, rain-filled air, Joan, playing with the little Hope, keeping her from being terrified by the darkness and the rush of sound, suddenly fell quite still where she knelt. She turned her head; her attitude became that of one who was tensely and painfully listening.

When she spoke it was with a strange voice. "Does it come again to you as it did last year?"

"Yes," said Aderhold; "it comes by force of association. Dismiss it from your mind."

"It comes as close as though it were going to be real again."

"It is the darkness and oppression and the feeling of being pent. It will pass. — Look at the Bird-with-Wide-Wings! She is laughing at us."

The hurricane raved itself to a close; the light came and the blue sky, the sun shone out. There followed a week of this; then, one morning at sunrise, Joan, coming out of the hut into the space beneath the trees, looked seaward and uttered a cry. "Gilbert — Gilbert!"

Aderhold came to her side. "What is it?"

Her arm was raised and extended, the hand pointing. A ship stood off the island.

All that day it was there; it hovered, as it were, it reconnoitred. It sent out no boats, but there was something that said that it had seen the village.

It came near enough, and the clearing would be visible from the rigging. The Indians' canoes, moreover, were there upon the beach. . . . It was a ship with dingy sails, with a bravo air, yet furtive, too. Once it clapped on sail and dwindled to a flake, and those who watched from out a screening belt of wood thought that it was gone. But it seemed that it meant only to sail around the island, for presently the outlook in the tallest tree saw its shape, having doubled a long point, enlarge again across this green and silver spit. When the second morning dawned, there it was again, dusky, ill-omened, riding the deep water beyond the reef that somewhat guarded the shore. . . . Then the air thickened, and there threatened a hurricane. The ship turned and scudded away. While the sky darkened, she vanished, sinking beneath the horizon to the south.

The storm broke, reigned and passed. When it was over, when, save for the myriad small wreckage and the whitened and high-running sea, there was calm again, then fell talk and discussion enough as to that ship, foreboding enough, excitement enough in the village. The Indians made new spears or tried trusted old ones, sharpening afresh every point. They had bows and arrows, though they put more dependence in their spears, and in short hatchets, headed with bits of sharpened rock. Whatever weapons there were were got in order. That done, all that they could do was done. Their not unhealthful clime, their search for food, their fishing, swimming,

their games and ceremonial dances kept their bodies, slight and not greatly muscular though they were, yet in a condition of some strength and readiness. Now they had only to wait. . . . They waited, but no ship came back, nor other ships appeared.

The bad season passed, the good days came around again, and still no fleck of a sail showed on all the round of the blue ocean. The Indians ceased to glance up continually from whatever employment they were about. Now they looked not once a day, now they ceased all active expectation, now the matter grew dim, remote, now it faded almost from mind. The old chief, perhaps, still looked seaward, but the village at large had short memories when immediate anxieties were lifted. Life took up again the old, smooth measure.

But Aderhold and Joan could not forget. Subtly they felt that the current was wearing another channel. There were cloud shapes below the horizon. They were happy. Their joy in each other and in the child was, if that could be, deeper — the very shape of fear gave an intensity, a lambent rose and purple, a richer music — made it deeper. Their service to the folk among whom they had fallen was no less. . . . But they felt a threat and a haunting and a movement of life from one house to another.

At last, on a calm and glorious morning, they saw the ship again — that ship and another. The two lowered sail, down rattled the anchors; they swung at ease in the still water beyond the fringing reef.

Their flags were Spanish; they sent a shot from a culverin shrieking across to the land. It sheared the top of a palm tree; the green panache came tumbling to the ground. Birds rose with clamour and fled away; the shot echoed from a low hill back in the island. Forth from the ships' sides put boats — boat after boat until there were a number — and all filled with armed men.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SPANIARDS

THE slave-seekers, one hundred and fifty armed men, struck a flag into the earth before the village and demanded a parley. Their leader or captain was a tall, black-bearded person, fierce and fell of voice and aspect. He came to the front and shouted to the Indians in a mixture of Spanish and Indian words. Also he made friendly-seeming gestures. "No harm meant — no harm meant! Friends — friends! Your kindred send you messages — from a happy country — much happier than here where you live! Let us come into your village and talk. — We have beads and scarlet cloth —"

But the village kept silence. At Aderhold's instigation, immediately after the ship's first visit, it had digged around itself a shallow ditch and planted in part a stockade of sharpened stakes, in part a tall and thorny hedge. Within this manner of wall were gathered some four hundred souls, counting men, women, and children. Besides the infants and the small boys and girls there were the old and infirm and the sick. All were naked of other defence than this one barrier and the frail, booth-like walls of their huts. They were armed only with primitive

weapons. The word "Spaniard" meant to them ogre and giant.

If they were not truly ogres and giants, the slave-seekers were yet active, hardened, picked men, trained in cruelty, practised in wiles, fired with lust of the golden price. When the village held silent, the leader tried again with blandishments; when there came no answer but the hot sunshine and the murmur of wood and sea, the company lifted its flag and advanced with deliberation. From behind the wall came a flight of spears and arrows. A Spaniard staggered and fell. Some savage arm, more sinewy than most, had sent a spear full through his neck. There arose a roar of anger. The men from the ships, the black-bearded one at their head, rushed forward, came tilt against the stockade and the thorn hedge. . . . They had not believed in the stoutness of any defence, nor of these Indians' hearts. But driven back, they must believe. Carrying with them their wounded, they withdrew halfway to the sea and held council.

In the village they mended the gaps in the wall of stakes and thorny growth, and that done, watched and waited. The sun rode high, the children went to sleep. . . . The old chief — the fighting men, the women gathered around him — talked with high, ironic passion of days gone by in this island, in this island group. "They came, and our fathers' fathers thought they were gods or men like gods! They had their wooden cross, and they planted it in the

sand, side by side with their flag that says 'Slay!' They said that both were pleasing to the Great Spirit, and that they were his favoured children. They went away and our fathers' fathers thought of them as gods and their country as the house of the Great Spirit. . . . They who had been children when they came grew to be men. There were men and men, then, in this land, men and men! Then the Spaniards came again. They told our fathers that they came from heavenly shores. They said that there, would our fathers only go with them in their many ships, they would find their dead again! Find them living and bright and always young. Find them they loved. Find their forefathers whom the Great Spirit loved and kept always about him. Find all they dreamed about. Find happiness. . . . They were weak of mind and they believed! They went into the Spaniards' ships — hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. Next year the Spaniards came again and they brought what they said were messages from the red men who had gone last year to the heavenly shores. It was truly where the Great Spirit dwelt and where the dead lived again and all the red men who could should come. . . . And they whose islands these were were weak in judgment and listened and believed and went. The Spaniards carried them away in their ships — men and men and men and women and children. They loaded their ships with them as though they were nuts or fruit or fish they had caught, or the gold that they are

always seeking. They carried them away, and next year they came for more. They took these too. And now this country was growing as it is to-day — trees where once there were people. But at last one escaped from the 'heavenly shores,' and after long toil and suffering reached these islands and told the truth. So at last when the Spaniards came the people fought them. But they were strong and the people were weak. And more and more trees grew where once there had been men! Now" — said the old chief — "I will tell you about those heavenly shores, for I, too, have been there. I will tell you of what we from this country do there, and what is done to us." He told, circumstantially, a tale of fearful suffering.

Many of the Indians, men and women alike, determined to die rather than be taken. But many, and perhaps the most, were neither strong nor stoic, and there was a doubt, Aderhold and Joan felt, and the old chief felt. . . . Neither that day nor that night did there befall another attack. The Spaniards camped upon the shore, but the watching village saw boats go to and fro between the land and the ships. The night was dark and they saw moving lanterns. With the dawn one of the ships slowly felt her way farther into the crooked channel; when she anchored again she lay much nearer than before, and her row of culverins grinned against the village. Moreover, three lesser pieces had been dismounted and brought ashore. In the nighttime they had

made a platform and mounted these falcons or sakers.

As the sun rushed up, they sent a broadside against the wall and the huts beyond. The flame and thunder terrified, the iron shot wrought havoc. They sent another round, tore a great gap in the hedge, then with a shout charged, the whole company, across the open strip. . . . The bravest of the village fought desperately, but the breach was made. Many of the assailants were partly mailed. The Indians' weapons turned against steel headpieces and backs and breasts. The Spaniards' pikes and cutlasses had advantage; their strength and ruthless practice had advantage; their name, their face, their voice carried terror to these forest people. Yet they fought, the braver sort striking twice — for themselves and for those whose joints were as water. The old chief grew young again. His eyes breathed fire; he fought and he cried his people on with a great, chanting voice. . . . A turn in the confused struggle brought the black-bearded Spaniard facing Aderhold and Joan. "Mother of God! What's here? White skins leading these devils and fighting against us? Flay you alive —"

Men drove between. There was a great noise, a panting heat, a rocking and swimming of all things before the eyes. A crying arose. Unlooked for, suddenly, there had been sent ashore from the ships the final numbers of their crew and company. Thirty fresh assailants poured with shouts and lifted

weapons through the broken defences. . . . The fearful among the Indians, and those who thought slavery better than death, threw down whatever weapons they bore and made gestures of submission and entreaty. Others were overpowered. There were many who could not fight—the sick, the infirm, and aged, many children. The terror of these and their wailings weakened the hearts of those who did fight. Moreover, the Spaniards knew what to do. They took a child and threw it from pike point to pike point, and found Indian words in which to threaten a like fate to every babe. The Indian mothers cried out to fight no more.

The slave-seekers came in mass against those who yet struggled. They cut down the old chief, fighting grimly; they ran him through the body with a pike and slew him. Aderhold and Joan with others, men and women, fought before a hut in which had been placed a number of children. A Spaniard came behind Aderhold and struck him down with a blow upon the head. He lay for a minute stunned; when his senses cleared all was over. All were beaten down, cowed, disarmed. Hands would have seized Joan. She fought them off, sprang into the hut and caught up her child, then, with her in her arms, came back to Aderhold's side. . . .

The victors were accustomed to victory. The fighting over, the business conducted itself according to custom. This affair differed only from many others in that there had been a resistance of unex-

pected firmness. Victory had not been without hurt, without, even, the loss of Spanish lives. Business, reacting, conducted itself therefore with something less of contemptuous and careless disregard of pain inflicted and something more of vindictive willingness to inflict it. The conquered were driven together and stripped of every belonging which, by any ingenuity, might be converted into a weapon either against their masters or their own now wretched lives. The black-bearded captain told off guards, and beside pike and cutlass the lash appeared. . . . The ships were to be furnished fruit and cassava cakes and the casks filled with water. The already slaves were set to the task. Graves must be dug for the Spanish dead, and these the slaves dug. Their own dead went unburied. The black-bearded man walked in front of the rows of captives and with a jerk of his thumb indicated the too badly wounded, the sick who would not survive the voyage, the too old. These they put away with sword or dagger or pike thrust. The children were to go — healthy children had value. At last he came to Aderhold and Joan. He stood still before them, looked them up and down, his beard bristling. "Spanish?" he said. "No, no! I think not! — English, then? English — English — English! How did you come here?"

"Through shipwreck."

"You taught them to fight us. English — English — English! Well, we shall see, English! — Are you heretics?"

"If you mean are we of the English Church, we are not of the English Church."

"English have no church. There is only one church and religion. Are you of the Holy Catholic Church and Religion?"

"No."

"Then," said the black-bearded man and spat toward them, "I will take you as a present to those who are."

He stood off and regarded them. Joan with the child sat on the earth, in the hot sunlight. The child's terrified crying had hushed; in her mother's arms she had sobbed herself to sleep. She lay half covered by Joan's skirt, shadowed by her mother's bending breast and face. The Spaniard's countenance twisted until it was like a gargoyle's for cruelty and ungenial mirth. Without a word he stooped and with one great slashing stroke of his dagger slew the child. . . .

They bound Joan, and she lay at last, prostrate upon the earth, her forehead touching the child's still feet. Aderhold sat beside the dead and the living love. . . . Around was heat and glare, huge suffering, brute indifference, brute triumph, life brought low, life iron-shod trampling life, a battlefield of instincts, a welter of emotions, tendencies in impact, old and deep ideas opposed to ideas . . . and all with which he and Joan were ranged in time and space, — their stream and current — here and now, as often before and often to come, the loser,

the loser drowning in defeat. . . . He felt the wide cold, the check, the bitter diminishing, felt it impersonally for the enormous current, the stream where there were so many drops; then, because he was man, felt it for this childish people, felt it, a bitter and overwhelming tide, for himself and Joan. Woe — woe — there was so much woe in living. . . .

All the rest of that day the enslaved brought food and rolled casks of water for the ships. When night came they were let to sleep, lying on the ground, in a herd. Now and again through the darkness rose a sharp cry of grief, or ran from one to another a sobbing and groaning. But the most slept heavily, without movement. Dawn came, and the slaves were roused. They were permitted to eat a little food — and then they were driven to the shore and into the boats. . . . Their dead, their village, their island were severed from them. They were left naked to the beating of new tides. . . .

Joan and Aderhold were put upon the ship with the darker sails — the ship that had come first to the island. The hold of this ship was inexpressibly, fearfully crowded with the enslaved. When the hatches were closed, it was a black pit, a place of gasping, fighting for breath. When morning came the Spaniards, seeing that otherwise much of their property would die and become no man's property, drew out several score and penned them in a narrow space upon the deck. Aderhold and Joan were brought forth with the others, driven here with

them, pressed by the mass close against the ship's side.

Day crept away, sunset came. The island where they had dwelled was long fallen from sight. Out of the sea before them, though as yet at some distance, rose the shape of an outermost islet of this group. When that should be passed, there would lie an expanse of ocean, and, at last, driving south, would rise the great island to which they were bound. The sun dipped below the horizon, but over against it rose the round and silver moon. By its light could be seen the strengthening outline of the last island, at length the very curve of surf, the beach and sombre palms.

Aderhold moved, touched Joan who sat as if in a trance. About them many of the Indians had fallen asleep or lay, beaten down to a half-consciousness. At no great distance were the guards. But these had no fear now of that cowed shipload, and so paid little attention. Amidships and forward were Spaniards enough, but these talked and swore or gamed among themselves or gazed at the island without lights by which they were slipping. Aderhold bent and whispered in Joan's ear. For a moment she sat motionless; then slowly the mind returned and became active, though through dark veils of woe.

She nodded. "Yes, yes! Let us go! If we die we may find her."

"Wait until that cloud is between us and the moon."

It came between and the ship and the decks darkened. The two rose with caution to their feet. About them were darkness, shadowy forms, blended sounds, but no eye seemed to see what they were about, no voice cried out an alarm. They were close to the ship's side — one other moment and they had swung themselves up, leaped overboard. . . . They touched the dark water, went under, rose, struck out. In their ears rang no shout or sound of discovery. The sucking and turmoil of the water about them lessened. A fresh wind was blowing and the ship sailed swiftly. She was no longer huge above them, they came out of her shadow; she was seen at a slight distance, then at a greater and a greater. . . . They were free of her, free also of her consort, the other ship. The wide ocean swept around.

It swept around save where the island rose. It rose not at all far away, a quiet and lonely strand. A light surf broke upon its shore. Sometimes floating, sometimes swimming, the two who would yet have life gained toward it. They gained toward it until at last they reached it, came out of the beating surf, and lay with closed eyes and fluttering breath upon the moonlight-coloured sand.

CHAPTER XXX

THE ISLET

THIS was a small island or cay. They found water and they found fruit and cassava, and with these and a shelter of boughs and leaves of the little palm they raised again the flag of life. . . .

The death of the child. For a time that made of existence a cruel buffet, a sore bruise. The parents grieved. But time dealt with that grief — time and inner strength. At length it diffused itself, adding its own hue to many-tinted consciousness, its own strain to life's vast orchestration, but no longer darkening and making to throb all moments of the waking day. They had within them a coördinating, harmonizing power, and sorrow brought its own wealth and added to the whole.

The outward activities of life narrowed, indeed, upon this islet. But here also they took circumstance and enlarged its bounds and deepened its meaning. They brought will and intellect to bear upon environment, moulded it as far as might be and increased their havings. Here nor nowhere in this universe could they be less than interested. Flotsam upon this islet, yet here as elsewhere the mind found food and field of action and through small doorways passed into wide countries.

Love burned clear, love of man and woman. It kept its heyday. But beside it rose, higher and more massive than in the peopled, busy island, other ranges of the mind. The child's death — and the loss of the Indian village and of the old chief and the recurring vision of that oppression and the inhumanity of their kind — and the deep loneliness of this place — all wrought upon them. Moreover, the spring of inward growth was strong and constant. Year by year, with Joan as with Aderhold, the spirit travelled further in all its dimensions.

The mind. . . . Here upon this span of earth the old ache for knowledge, the old brooding and longing of the mind came back to Aderhold, came more imperiously, larger, wider-robed. This ball of earth and the criss-cross of movement upon it. This sun and the chain that held to it the ball of earth. What was the chain? These stars and clouds of stars — this sea of ether — light in waves. . . . Again, the growth of plants — motion fluent as a stream. And the life that dwelt in shells — that made its armour and outgrew it. . . . Ceaseless change, transition, — kinds linked by likeness to other kinds, kinds growing out of other kinds, the trunk branching. He thought that all kinds might have branched from one or few, and the selfsame sap in all. He did not believe in a myriad unconnected, arbitrary creations. . . . But if the least leaf and tendril knew motion, alteration, growth, then the sap, too, knew it — the sap that was supposed to be so moveless, so

perfected. . . . Kin and kin again — one and one again.

As for Joan — her mind trod differing roads, though with many a point of contact, many an inn where she met him who travelled too. As of Heron's cottage her hands and head had wrought a bright pastoral, an unfrayed and well-woven garment of life — as in the peopled island she had with a larger and a freer play, with a more creative and a nobler touch, made life not an idyll only, but an idyll and something more, so here she lived a nobler poem. Her child's death brought into it deeper tones, as of an organ, as of violins. And as she had lit torches for Aderhold, so had he lit torches for her. She thought and imaged with a wider sweep than had once been possible. She thought and imaged now for the whole world; she dreamed light for all.

To both the time upon this isle was a time of deepening vision, of a crescent sense of inward freedom and power. To a stranger's chance-lighting eye they would have seemed but two castaways, narrowly environed, scantly living, lonely and lost, of necessity wretched. They were not wretched, or lonely, or lost.

Months passed — the year — a great part of another year. Then one day again they saw a sail. . . . It was the beginning of the stormy season, and there had been rough weather. To-day the sky was blue, the air but gently moving, but there had been a gale to drive ships and make wrecks. This ship had not

been greatly hurt, but the winds had driven her out of her course. Moreover, there had been leakage among her water-casks. It was with joy that she saw this islet lift upon the horizon. She made it, found a large-enough harbour between two horns of coral rock and sand, and presently sent her longboat, filled with seamen, to the shore. They rowed in cautiously, keeping a good lookout, for, while it was but an islet and looked desert, there might be Indians or pirates or Spaniards. No harm showing, they made a landing and came upon the shore. — It was now to search for water.

In the search they found a palm-thatched hut, and, standing expectant before it, a white man and woman. — "Who be you?" demanded the boatswain in good Devon.

The ship was the Eagle, sailing home from Virginia, having brought out colonists and supplies. Now it was taking home samples of native products, two or three Indians for show, and not a few dissatisfied adventurers, with others of a stouter make who were bound with representations to the Company or upon various upgathering missions. . . . Who were the white man and woman? They were Giles and Ellice Herne, shipwrecked here several years ago. The captain, who presently came ashore, was questioning them. From London? Aye, then! and their ship? The Needs Must, sailing from port of London. The captain rubbed his brows. He did not remember the ship or the loss of her, but then more

and more ships were going out, and he could not remember all names or accidents. All lost? Giles and Ellice Herne could not tell. They had escaped in a small boat. Those with them had died. — Would they be taken back to England? — The captain was a bluff old sea-dog, literal-minded and not inquisitive. He assumed that their tale was true in the main, and he assumed that, of course, they wished to be taken back to England. Otherwise, there would be something wrong with them. He hardly waited for an answer, but turned eyes and mind toward the water-casks. He was in haste; he wished to up sail and away while the sky was still without clouds.

The two, left alone at last after all exclamation and question, faced a decision — how momentous an one made itself felt between them. They stood in the brown light of their hut, the doorway framing blue sea and sky and the Eagle, quivering to be gone.

Aderhold spoke. "If we refused to go, it is most likely — it is certain, I think — that they would force us with them. We should be thought mad — or if not that, they would hold that we were not simply castaways. They would take us still, and from the first we should rest under suspicion."

"At any time the Spaniards may come again," said Joan; "then again horror . . . death. Or some other harm may come to one of us here — and the other left alone. That is often in my mind, and I know that it is often in yours."

go with their husbands to whatever new worlds might be discovered. These helped Joan to fitter clothing than any she possessed. She came back to Aderhold in a linsey kirtle and bodice, a small white cap, and with a kerchief folded across her bosom. "Hawthorn again," she said with a sob in her throat. He, too, had been given clothing. He was dressed plainly, like a clerk. No one was by, the soft dusk closing in. They stood for a moment and within them rose the vivid shape of the past. They smelled again the fern and mould of Hawthorn Forest; they heard again the drone of the bees, the singing of the stream past the fairy oak; they heard again the distant church bells. Rose the great image, grave and golden, of the six years past, rose the vision of the child, rose old memories, tendernesses, fears, rose forebodings, prophecies, realizations. It was dusk, the wind making a low, sustained music. They came to each other's arms, they embraced closely, straining each to each with passion. They kissed, the tears stood in the eyes, fell upon the cheeks of each. It was like a farewell, and it was like a meeting. . . .

Upon the ship was a man neither young nor old, who had come out to Virginia the year before, sent by the Company upon some investigation. Now, the work done, he was returning. He had a strong, determined face, steady eyes and a close-shutting mouth. On the day of their coming aboard, he with others had approached Giles and Ellice Herne and

asked them questions. They had been true questions; he was interested in knowing how they got upon that island, but preferred the detail of how they had managed to live while there. After that, with some frequency he sought them out and fell into talk. The rest upon the ship were preoccupied with the struggles and miseries and triumphs of the Colony. To them it was growing to be home. But the Company's agent, his errand done, was returning to England like Antæus to Mother Earth. He must talk, and guided by some subtle principle of choice, he talked to these people who also must be homesick for England.

The two strove to be guarded, spoke little themselves, passed well enough for a quiet clerk or scrivener or teacher and his wife whom the whimsical fortunes of the time had made colonists, and wind and wave and ill chance castaways on that islet. Wisdom made them not too silent, not to seem morosely so—nor too guarded, not to make it evident that they were watching from behind barricades. It was chiefly to Aderhold that he talked, Joan sitting by, her hands clasped in her lap, her eyes upon the sea, narrowing between them and England. He talked, it seemed to Aderhold, with boldness, but then the castaway gathered that upon the issues that interested this man, men in England, in six years' time, had grown bolder.

News from England! News of England when the agent left England last year was the already two-

years-old news that the king meant to rule without Parliaments. Perhaps when they landed in London they might find newer news — perhaps the king, wanting money very badly, had wanted it enough at last to summon a Parliament. If that were so, the agent of the Company hoped that certain men had seats. He mentioned among others John Pym. News! There was the news that the Bishops were in the saddle. Episcopacy had been established in Scotland. Timid and recreant ministers had gone over, the patriotic were in hiding, — proscribed. The people were at the mercy of the wolves — the Crown's wolves. In England just as bad — though with a difference. The Established Church rode high and kissed the hand of the king. "Passive obedience!" It had got its shibboleth. "No power in the people and disordered multitude." — God's own hand having touched the forehead of kings! "Did I not tell ye?" says the king; and with one hand puts down the civil courts and with the other lifts the ecclesiastical.

News! The news from England was Despotism that barked like Cerberus out of three mouths — King, Bishops, and Favourites! The agent's face turned red and the veins in his forehead stood out, so in earnest and angry was he. "News of England!" he said, "is that slaves will be slaves and free men will be free men! News of England is that if things better not there will be battles!" He swung round upon Aderhold. "I speak more plainly

than I should! But if I can read men, your passion, too, is for freedom!"

"Aye," said Aderhold, "I would be free."

Another time, when for some minutes they had been watching the sea in silence, the determined-faced man spoke with sudden energy. "Do you not hold that the Presbyterian or Calvinist form of religion and the rule of the people — such as are landowners and tend neither to Popery on the one hand nor to any manner of disbelief on the other — through Parliaments duly chosen is the way of God upon earth?"

Aderhold kept silence, his eyes upon the moving sea. When he spoke at last it was almost dreamily. "The only way? . . . Do you?"

Something in the fast-flowing field, the field that was but the surface of depth, or in the mist-veiled sky, or in the tone of the castaway, checked the other's reply. At last he said slowly, "It is right to resist a king who would rule us beyond what the sense of man allows."

"Yes," said Aderhold, "that is right."

"That is what I care for," said the agent; "that is the way of God to me. The bishops go with the king and preach tyranny, so the bishops are to be fought too. He who wishes to be free surely will not chain his will to the Pope's throne. So what is there left but Calvin — if you exclude these mad Independents who spring up like mushrooms! At any rate, in England to-day the men who oppose the

king's tyranny are like to smack of Edinburgh or Geneva!"

"In a manner I believe that to be true," said Aderhold. "Not yet do they wish freedom around and around. But never will I deny that it is much to begin to image freedom!"

The ship sailed on through good and bad weather. To the two castaways danger seemed to sleep. No one troubled them on this ship, preoccupied with its own affairs. The fact that they were seen with the agent of the Company procured for them a certain respect. The days slipped by, the weeks slipped by — pearl-grey weeks, quiet, halcyon.

There came a summer eve when, hand in hand, Joan and Aderhold watched England rise from out the sea. None was by. They stood long in silence; then, "Do you remember," said Joan in a low voice, "how we ran through the castle wood with the great moon on high? How we lay in that pit with the branches over us while they that hunted us went by? Do you remember the woman with the three daughters who gave us bread and milk?"

"I remember it all," said Aderhold. "May we come forth now as then! . . . The smell of the hay there in the barn where we lay all day. . . . The white road that first night from the prison and the starry sky over the gallows tree."

"Over the gallows tree!"

"Once I thought a thing like that the fearfullest thing! Now, though I love life more now than I did

then, I do not think so. The old terrors grow smaller. They will come one day, I think, to cause laughter."

"I understand that," said Joan. "Nor do they matter to me as they did. Neither the gallows tree, nor words like witch and sorcerer, heretic and atheist!"

The shore before them grew in distinctness, grew and grew as they stood there alone, withdrawn, watching. With that increasing definiteness, that rigour of line and hue and shape, came with a growing form, a growing sharpness of menace, came as it had not come to them before upon this ship, a realizing knowledge that here there was no change; that the hot ploughshares and the sharp swords were yet ready laid for folk like them to move across! England was England still. . . . They heard upon the wind, "*Witch and Sorcerer — Witch and Sorcerer — doubly damned for that you were judged and lay not still under our judgement! Witch and Sorcerer. . . . Fornicators — for in what church were read your marriage banns, and what priest with lifted hands blessed your union? . . . Blasphemers, deniers, atheists who pray not to Jehovah! Witch and Sorcerer— Witch and Sorcerer —*"

They were not wholly free from fear and shrinking. They looked at each other with whitened faces. But they had said true when they had said that they were freer. They recovered, they smiled into each other's eyes. "I wonder how much of us they will hang or burn —"

The shores grew plainer, higher. There came, suddenly, a summons to the captain. They found him in the great cabin, papers upon the table. Still short of speech, incurious and literal, he now had duties which he would perform. He had to give account to the proper officers of the Eagle's voyage and of those whom she brought into England, and he proposed not to lose sight of the castaways, Giles and Ellice Herne, until the right authorities gave him quittance. He could not remember the Needs Must, but there were many who would. Any saved from any lost ship had an importance, for they could give to her owners information where had been guessing. Therefore the captain meant to send the two ashore with a trusted man who would take them before such and such persons in authority. There they would be questioned, and if they answered to satisfaction would doubtless be helped. The captain, with a wave of his hand dismissing them, turned to other business. He left a sharp enough thorn of anxiety with the two who had fled England on the Silver Queen.

Night passed. Morning broke — English summer, soft and sweet. Here was the Thames mouth, here other winged ships and ships at anchor, here the green shores, the waving trees, the clustered houses, here England — England!

As they stood watching with full hearts the agent of the Company came to them from the poop deck. "You have no money?"

"No."

"Have you friends in London?"

"No."

He held out to Aderhold a woolen purse, open, showing two gold nobles and some silver pieces. "Yes, take it — and no need for thanks! I have gotten good from you. — You will want work?"

"Yes."

"I have weight enough with the Company to get you a clerkship."

Aderhold thanked him again, and with warmth of feeling, but shook his head. He had plans, he said. — But when the agent was gone the two smiled at each other. Gold and plans! . . . They had had plans — they had planned. What they had planned was to lose themselves, immediately upon leaving the ship, in the crowd which doubtless would gather at the waterside, then to slip into some street or lane and begone. Somewhere in the tangled heart of London, in some poor street, in some garret, they might find a lodging. Then work to live by. . . . There had risen a vision, not unhomely, comforting, hopeful — physician's work among the poor and obscure, sempstress or spinster's work, quiet life in the shadow but with gleams of sun. . . . But now the plans seemed hardly even gossamer.

The Eagle came slowly into port. Aboard was bustle and confusion. With the rattling down of her anchor appeared the small boats, the wherries, clamouring to take all ashore. A barge brought port

officers. These came up the side. . . . All was well, all might go ashore. The agent of the Company would go, it seemed, in the port barge. Giles and Ellice Herne watched him leave the ship. He had been a friend; they felt gratitude and liking; they watched the dwindling boat and thought it doubtful if, in this round of life, they would ever see the agent again. . . .

Their time came — they were to go with the second mate, a broad-shouldered, surly, watchful man.

The catch into which they stepped was crowded with the lesser sort of the Eagle's passengers. Here were the dissatisfied, returning folk, and here with their exploiter were the Indians brought for show. Aderhold, looking at them, had a fleeting thought of a booth, paused before on a morning when he had set out northward from London, years ago. . . . Shipping loomed about them, Thames side before them. The high, narrow houses, the roofs, the windows, the roaring streets, the throng about the water steps, pushing and jostling for a sight of the disembarking — talking and shouting, people greeting and being greeted, a swarm and distraction! Joan sat elbow on knee, hand pressed against lips, her eyes wide, and, as far as Thames side was concerned, unseeing. What else she saw she did not say, but her face had a soft and brooding look. . . . The catch made its landing. Joan and Aderhold, placed in the stern, were the last to come out upon the

water stairs. Before them the second mate shouldered his way. About them was the English crowd, beneath their feet soil of England. Home — home — home where they were born!

CHAPTER XXXI

THE HOUR-GLASS

THEY were moving with the second mate through a busy street, toward a harsh old pile of buildings. The mate was a watchful man. To start aside from him into some court or lane or other street, to elude him and vanish, was from the start a clearly hopeless thing. Did they try it he would raise a hue and cry. They went with him in silence, watching Fate to see what she would do.

The street was narrow, the houses dark, and high, with overhanging storeys, with swinging signs. Above showed only one pale stripe of sky. There were booths and shops, with an occasional stentor crying of "What d' ye lack? — What d' ye lack?" Many people went up and down — type after type that Aderhold recalled. The years since he had been in London had made no great difference. He thought that he discerned more party men — in many a greater stiffness of bearing, a darker hue and plainer cut in apparel. The chance words and phrases caught in passing had an interest. . . .

In old, old days there had come to him at times of crisis, a detachment, an awareness of impersonality, a perception that, actor here, he was no less spectator of his action, safe in further space and

time. The perception returned, and came with greater strength than ever before, and with it, too, an old sense of deepening light. He turned his face toward Joan beside him. . . . She was gazing upon London town, her grey eyes calm and bright, her lips parted, rose colour in her cheeks. In a manner she looked as young, as free from care and danger as when, on a holiday, Joan Heron had come with her father from the huntsman's house in the castle wood and had strolled here and there and to and fro in the town six miles from Hawthorn. She looked as young and like a girl, and yet the next moment there moved beside him the woman, the mind and soul that had grown. But the calmness held, the bright stillness, the manner of radiance. She put out her hand and touched Aderhold's. "Do you feel it? — I felt only fear this morning, but now, somehow, I do not believe that I shall ever feel fear again. The things that were so great have become little."

The early morning had been clear, but the sky, overcast when they left the Eagle, was now darkening rapidly. There came a silver dash of rain, increasing to a downpour. With slanted bodies and bent heads men and women hastened to shelter. Some hurried on to destinations not so far away; others, with farther to go, took present refuge under overhanging eaves or in doorways. The rain fell with a steady, rushing sound; the gutters began to fill and overflow; the air grew dark and still. "Stand by," said the mate, "until the cloud empties!" The

three stepped under the cover of an antique porch, so jutting from the building of which it made a part that the street had been forced to bend. Others were here before them, perhaps a dozen in all. Some were citizens, three or four country or small town people, viewing the sights of London. These had with them for guide and showman some city friend.

The latter was speaking with distinctness, in a cheerful and complacent voice. "This was one of the old religious houses. Over yonder used to be a field where in Queen Mary's time they burned people."

The country folk looked with interest, not at the old religious house, but at the row of small buildings where once had been the field.

One spoke. "Did you ever see a man or woman burned?"

"No," said the citizen. "It's dying out. They mostly hang people now."

A man in a sad-coloured dress spoke with an abrupt, harsh voice. "There are sins that you should burn for. I believe not in your weak mercy. What is good enough for God on High is good enough for me. He burns sinners. If you do not believe in burning sinners, you do not believe in God as shown forth in his written Word."

"I think witches should be burned," said the citizen.

The first country speaker put in his word again. "I saw one burned once when I was a young man! She was a tall, fair wench, and when the flames went

up around her she cried out only one thing to the crowd of us watching. She cried it thrice. 'When you feel fire, feel what you have believed!'"

"What did she mean?" asked the citizen.

"I do not know," answered the countryman. "There's been an outbreak of witches this summer! They're getting very bold in the North. If you hear of one, the next day you hear of another. For one thing, as soon as there's known to be a witch abroad, people are on the lookout —"

The downpour of rain had lessened into a shower.

"Make sail!" said the mate.

Leaving the porch, the three from the Eagle moved on up the narrow street between the rain-washed houses. They were now at no great distance from their destination. As they walked the two tried to hear the questions that would be put to them and to frame answers. . . . But it was difficult, difficult. In both the impulse that was gathering strength, that was, as they both now began to perceive, the destined conqueror, was the impulse still to serve the truth. They were not fanatic, and they loved life. But side by side with the recognition that hardly, hardly could they escape, that they would have to make a tissue of statements that could and in all human likelihood would be disproved, streamed stronger and stronger the distaste for that web of misstatement, the liking for a plain relation of their being and its acts. They were conscious of no ecstasy, no hot, martyr enthusiasm, but direction was

taken. With that deep inward movement came to each a feeling of strengthened personality, of unison, harmony. . . .

The wet and glistening street, the houses, the roofs, the sky, the people passing up and down, — the windows, the signs — Before them they saw a swinging tavern sign, painted and cut in the shape of a great hour-glass. The tavern had a wide window, overhanging the street, and in the window, as the three from the Eagle came in line with it, appeared the ruddy, determined face of the agent of the Company. He looked out upon the street from which the rain had in great part driven the people; saw and hailed his fellow voyagers.

"Well met, good folk! Whither away —"

The second mate told the port to which they were making. The man in the window was a person of importance to the Eagle and its seamen. The mate spoke with deference, and was ready to listen when the agent proposed that he and the two shipwrecked folk enter the Hour-Glass and drink a cup of wine. He knew that the agent had seemed to have a liking for the castaways — and they were not precisely folk under suspicion, but only to be, as it were, certified for. The agent spoke again with a touch of authority, and the mate said, "Very good, sir, and thank you kindly! A few minutes won't matter."

The determined-faced man had the inn's best room and had it to himself. He welcomed into it Giles and Ellice Herne, but left the mate in the com-

mon room with the host and a command for what he pleased to drink.

The mate spoke again. "I'm ordered, sir, not to let the shipwrecked people out of my sight."

"If you stay where you are you will see them still,' said the agent. "There is but one door to this room, and I leave it open."

The room had a sanded floor, a table, and benches. Outside the clouds were parting, and now a stormy sunlight broke through the window. The street began again to fill with people and their voices came confusedly into the room. A drawer brought wine.

"I frequent this inn," said the agent. "Moreover, by good luck, I find that a man whom I greatly desire to see is in London and sleeps here at the Hour-Glass. I await him now, and in the mean time lack entertainment. — I was glad to see you coming up the street." He poured wine. "Here's to the Eagle and freedom! — Has England changed to your eyes?"

"Yes and no," said Aderhold.

Bow bells were ringing. The sunlight suddenly flooded the room. Without the door the mate's rumbling voice was heard. "Two castaways —"

"I have been gone a year," said the agent. "The man that I am looking for is a coming man in England, and I expect to learn from him —"

The agent and Aderhold were standing by the table, but Joan had seated herself where through the

open casement she could see the clearing sky. The movement brought her into the shaft of light. It bathed, it etherealized face and form. She looked an immortal. . . . Placed so, she came first before the eye when the man, whose step was now heard without, swung the door wider and entered the room.

The agent started from the table. "Ha, Harry Carthew! I looked to find you —"

But Carthew had neither eye nor ear for the returned acquaintance and fellow-resister of the King. Harry Carthew stood like a man turned to stone. . . . Six years alone could not have made him look so much older. He looked much older — a stern and worn man, with a grim mouth and eyes where enthusiasm now burned bright and now sank among the embers of itself. He was dressed much as he used to dress. It was the face and figure of the man who had come to Heron's cottage, but there had been a long warfare in the nature and some degree of change. He stood starkly silent, with a great, arrested look, as if the very elements of his being stood still. . . . Joan, rising, passed from the beam of light into the shadow by Aderhold. They stood side by side, hand touching hand. With a final crash and clangour the bells stopped ringing.

"What is it?" demanded the agent. "You know these people —"

Carthew moistened his lips. They parted, but at first there came forth only an uncertain and broken sound. Then, — "You were long sought. But when

the Silver Queen came back from Virginia we learned that you had escaped upon her, but had been thrown from her for what you were, and were dead. Years ago . . . and you stand there. . . ."

The mate of the Eagle came to the door. "Sir, may we be going now?"

The agent crossed to him. "Not yet. Wait a little, there without —" A voice spoke from behind the mate. "I am with Master Carthew. I may enter, sir?"

The agent turned back into the room, and with him came a slight man with a steeple-crowned hat and a Geneva cloak. Joan and Aderhold faced Master Thomas Clement.

At last there came from the minister's lips, "Thou witch! Thou atheist and sorcerer!"

The agent of the Company struck his hand against the table. "Who are these?"

Harry Carthew turned and walked stiffly to the window-seat. When he reached it he sank down, rested his locked arms against the sill, and his forehead upon his arms. But Master Clement was of more iron make. His long forefinger shot out toward the two; he raised his arms, the black cloak falling away from them, his small figure dilated; he shook his lean and nervous hands; his voice, beginning on a low tone, grew shrill and rapid; his eyes burned. Zeal for the honour of his God had him.

"Who are they? Scorners of God and deniers of Revelation! Yoke-fellows with Satan and blas-

pheming workers and doers of evil! Who are they? Breakers forth from prison and just doom — cheaters of stake and gallows — froth of hell! Who are they? Say not that you have forgotten the Hawthorn trials!"

"The Hawthorn trials!"

"Who in England heard not of them? Of the wicked certain ones were hanged, but there broke gaol and escaped the unbeliever and sorcerer Gilbert Aderhold and the witch Joan Heron!" He stretched his arms higher, he shook his hands more vehemently. "But God for his glory," he said, "bringeth them back!"

Aderhold and Joan stood straight and silent. The shock of the encounter had driven the colour from cheek and lip, but there was no other sign of cowing. They knew now that they were in the arms of death. The knowledge did not frighten. This very day they had taken their direction — they were moving now as they had determined. . . . The agent leaned against the table, pale and staring.

Aderhold turned and spoke to him. "Our names are Joan Heron and Gilbert Aderhold. We are not witch and sorcerer — nor yoke-fellows with Satan — nor blasphemers of good. But we were judged by our neighbours and by the law to be such, and we were condemned to death and put in prison. By the help of a gaoler who is dead we escaped. We managed to stow ourselves upon the Silver Queen. In the seas near the island where the Eagle found us,

our names were discovered and the Silver Queen cast us adrift. By this fortune and by that we came first to a larger island and then to the islet from which the Eagle took us. That, so far as is needful to tell you, is our story. You have been good to us, knowing only what we showed. If you will believe, what we showed was ourselves."

Joan's voice, a rich, clear, low voice, followed his. "I am no witch, and he is no sorcerer. I was a country girl and he a physician who helped many. Now we are a man and woman who fare forward, wishing no ill to any."

As she spoke she moved, unconsciously, a step nearer to the table. The agent of the Company recoiled, put out his hand against her closer approach. In his face was a white horror. He remembered the Hawthorn witch trial. That year he had chanced to be in company with the elder Carthew, and no detail but had been given him. The very words of a ballad made upon the witch Joan Heron came into mind — forgotten, he might have thought, long since, but now flashing out in letters of fire — hell fire. It had been a ballad sold and bought throughout England, and it spared no strange assertion, nor none that was gross. *The Witch Joan Heron.* The ballad rang in his ears. He saw its title. THE ABHORRED WITCH; or, THE MONSTROUS LIFE OF JOAN HERON. . . . A look of sickness passed over the agent's face, no longer ruddy. He put his arm above his eyes. "Avaunt, witch!" he said.

Joan stepped back. Her eyes sought Aderhold's. He bent toward her, took her hands. She smiled and said in the Indian tongue they had learned upon that island. "Heart of my heart! The great sea is cold at first —"

"Hark!" cried Master Clement. "She speaks the tongue she learned of Apollyon!"

Harry Carthew rose from the window-seat. His face was yet without colour, drawn and sunken, grim and set. For the most part, with an iron effort, he kept his voice under control, but now it broke and sank and now it took a cadence of pain and horror. He leaned against the wall for support, and once or twice he lifted his eyes to where, in his thought, there sat God whom he had angered. "Master Clement, and my friend here," he said, "God knows I cannot doubt that this man is a sorcerer and this woman a witch! In his Bible God tells us that there are such and commands that they be done to death. Moreover, from old time, wise judges and men of law and knowledge, and devout and holy preachers of the Word have showed us how these wicked abound! As for these two, all manner of witness was brought against them, and proof irrefragable. Yea, and those who were hanged confessed that these two kept by day and by night companionship with Satan and did monstrous wickednesses. And that the man is an apostate and blasphemer, an atheist worthy of death, has been proved — nay, he himself denied nothing in that sort. All that, and the doom

pronounced against them, in this world and in the next, stands for true and lasting, and I have no part in it, and there the shadow comes not against me. . . . But there is a sin upon my soul, and God gives me no rest until I tell it —" He wheeled toward Master Clement. "I will tell it here and now, and appoint me a day and I will tell it in open church — So may offended God pardon me!"

"Harry Carthew! Harry Carthew!" cried Master Clement. "Every man alive has sin against his soul! The soul of every man alive is black as midnight, and no dawn cometh to it save from one that is not himself! Unless and save the dayspring chooseth to shine upon that soul, it resteth black and lost — it hath in itself no power of motion and light! But God hath elected thee, Harry Carthew! But this man and woman are of the deep gulf of hell, predestined and damned of eternity! What have you to do with them, my brother, my son — for Christ knoweth I love thee as a son —"

"What had I to do with them?" said Carthew. "I will tell you! At the trial in the town I gave evidence that he struck me in the side with a dagger that eve upon his road to prison. I lied. Sorcerer and atheist though he be, he told truth when he said that he did not so. And witch though she be, this woman told truth when there in the court she cried out against me. She told truth when she cried that that night I had come to her cottage to tempt her and that she struck me with a hunting-knife. . . .

What was I? I was a young man, mad for a fair woman — fair as her mother Eve who sinned before her! What was I? I was a man desirous to increase in name and fame, desirous of leadership — who therefore must not let men view his sin! But it was sin, and I know not if there be a greater —"

If he began as to a more general audience, he ended with a haggard-eyed appeal to Master Clement. . . . The minister's frame trembled; with a pale and scared face he fronted Harry Carthew whom he truly loved. "Harry Carthew! Harry Carthew! Pray to God—"

"I pray," said Carthew. "Night and day, I wrestle in prayer. I thought that He had answered and given me peace in service. The moment I ceased to serve and to act for this England, that moment Gehenna opened in my soul. . . . But now I see that He wanteth open confession." He turned upon the two where they stood beyond the shaft of light. "Joan Heron, I wronged you, — and Gilbert Aderhold, I wronged you, — and that I must say, though you be the Fiend's own! I must say it, though I stood in heaven and looked across the gulf upon you in hell —" He sank upon a bench by the table and flung his clasped hands above his head. "God, God! Grant me but to save my soul alive!"

Silence held in the room at the Hour-Glass. The agent of the Company leaned against the table, white and shaken. Master Clement came to Car-

thew, put his hand on his shoulder, and spoke in a trembling voice. "A great sin verily, and greatly to be repented. . . . But not the great sin, Harry Carthew — not the Unpardonable Sin. . . . God will have mercy. He will forgive. Have you not served Him well, and will you not do so, ever the more zealously? And will you not forever more guard your ways, that you fall not again into the pit? I trow that you will! Harry Carthew — Harry Carthew, we will pray together! You are too valuable — This very night I will come, and on our knees we will wrestle with Him as did Jacob of old —"

Joan and Aderhold stood hand in hand. What now they felt and thought was simple and whole. This room with its occupants seemed not to have over-greatly to do with them — it had widened out — they felt a larger world. . . . It was as though these old quarrels were childish concerns and fears and quarrels — small, intense, unknowing things — childish, pitiful. They felt them so, and yet they did not feel old, they felt young. . . .

Aderhold spoke, again to the agent of the Company. "Knowing nothing of our story, save that we were shipwrecked folk, you showed us much kindness. It does not hurt to take the thanks of shipwrecked folk. Believe that we are grateful for that kindness. This is to end, we know, in giving us into the hands of the law. Then let them call those who will take us."

Carthew rose from the seat where he had thrown himself. What wild emotion had possessed and actuated him was driven to cover and stillness. His face was grey, but set and grim with no softening in its lines. He would have said that softening were further sin. Out like a burned candle had gone long since his passion for Joan Heron that had never been high love.

His eyes met those of Master Clement, "Aye," he said, "end it!"

Master Clement nodded, turned, and left the room.

There was, it seemed, no great distance to send, and those sent for were not long in coming. Without the Hour-Glass it was now bright afternoon and many people going up and down. Whenever and wherever watch or ward was summoned the act of its summoning was apt immediately to become known. It was so here and now, and a crowd began to gather before the Hour-Glass. How there started a whisper of heinous crime, of escaped and retaken caitiffs, it were hard to say. Perhaps the host or the now staring and greatly excited mate of the Eagle had heard somewhat and had repeated what he had heard. But there started a murmur which grew to a buzzing sound and threatened to become clamour. "What was done? — Who is it? Ho, there, Hour-Glass! What happened?" The law appeared — half a dozen burly armed men with an officer at their head. "Within the Hour-Glass! Let us pass, good

people, let us pass!" They entered the tavern. Outside the crowd and the noise grew. "Traitors?" cried one, and another, "Poisoners?" but a third, "I can see through the window. It's a woman — *Witch! Witch!*"

CHAPTER XXXII

A JOURNEY

THEY lay for a month in prison in London. Then, all procedures having been met, the law would return them to the county where they had offended and the gaol from which they had broken and the gallows field which had waited six years.

They rode from London in company of a sheriff and a dozen horsemen, and they went by the road which Aderhold had travelled years before. He recognised this place and that. Where the ways were bad — and they were often bad — they dismounted and went afoot. So many were with them and so no danger at all was there of escape, that they were left unshackled, were even let to draw a little to themselves. At first the guard was rough of tongue, ready with frequent, unneeded commands, ready with coarse gibes. But the two answered quietly, or were silent without sullenness, and there was something in them that gave check. . . . At last the men conveyed them without insult, without much further speech to them direct. At night, when they came to town or village, they were lodged in the gaol. When they passed where there were people, and if it became known what manner of felons were here, they met with savage jeers and execrations. Sometimes

mud was thrown, sometimes flints. But it was not the guard's cue to tell names and offence — and England was not as populous then as now — and there were long miles of lonely peace. To Joan and Aderhold they seemed at times miles of a beautiful, a sunny peace. They knew how to talk together with few words, with a glance of the eye. And there were many times when, some space allowed them and the guards talking among themselves, the road became as it were their own. Then they spoke freely, though with low voices.

It was late summer, with autumn well in view upon the slope of the year. The landscape was growing russet, and none the less fair for that. And it was England — England after the blue plains of the sea and the low, coral isles. And it was country and pure air after the fetid London prison. And it was the land where they were born — it was home, seen after years away. These green fields and spreading trees — this English sky — these birds and flowers and crystal streams — these were no foes of theirs. These had never cast them out. Here as elsewhere, the great round earth had its own orthodoxy, but took scant heed of man's. . . . They saw England after long absence; and for all that they were to be slain here, they could find it beautiful, and for all that they knew where ended this road, they played with the happenings upon it.

Twenty miles out from London the sheriff's horse cast a shoe, and at the next smithy all must halt

until Grey Dick was shod. The smithy stood in the pleasant shadow of an oak so great that it must have been growing when the Conqueror came over. The hot smithy fire glowed within, iron struck rhythmically against iron. Beyond the tree was a well, and all were thirsty. They had not drawn bridle for several hours. The men dismounted — the two prisoners were given leave to do likewise, even to rest upon the earth beneath the oak.

The four children of the smith sat upon a log and watched with an intensity of interest horses and men and all their movements, and the man and woman half sitting, half lying beneath the oak. The smithy dog came up to these two, snuffed around them, and then lay down at their feet. *Clink! Clink!* and the trees began to wave in an afternoon breeze, and the voices of the men about the well and the smithy door sounded cheerful and hardy. The two had no misliking for the bright world. They sat watching the children. . . . The youngest child, a yellow-haired mite of three, would make an excursion of its own from the log, past the oak, to the door. In the course of the journey it came upon a protruding root, stumbled over it and fell. Joan sprang forward and lifted it to its feet. "There, there! You're not hurt — Look at the pretty flower you fell against!" The child decided not to cry, laughed instead. Joan's arm curved about the sturdy small form and pressed it to her. "Ah, what a good baby!" — The child was willing to stay and play,

but with suddenness found herself released, given a gentle push back toward the three upon the log. Joan took her seat again upon the turf. "It was n't wise to touch her. It's strange that it should be so, but if any saw they might bring it against her when she is grown."

She spoke without any pain for herself in her voice, but with yearning and tenderness for the child. "Now she's there and happy! She's got a stick to play with."

"Joan, Joan!" said Aderhold. "There will come a day—"

The horse was shod, the well-water drunk, guard and prisoners took again the road. The smith and his man had, at the last, their curiosity satisfied. "Witches and wizards! — Nay, if I had known that —"

The road presented its stream, here full, here very thin, of autumn travel. Little pictures and the whole picture had a clear, a vivid interest. Market people went by, drovers with cattle, sturdy beggars, children, country girls and swains, carters and their carts, mounted travel of merchants or justices or churchmen or country gentlemen. The mounted travel would always, authoritatively, have its curiosity gratified. "A ward with prisoners! — Who are your prisoners, sheriff?" The second morning it was a party of young gallants who would know this. They wore feathered hats, fine riding-clothes, boots of soft leather, their hair somewhat long and

curled. They were for King and Church — would all live, perhaps, to fight on that side. "Prisoners! What are your prisoners, sirrah!" Then, when they knew, — "Witch! Witch! A young witch, too! Let's see her — Zounds! Who's the man? . . . The Hawthorn two who fled! *Gilbert Aderhold — Joan Heron!*" Certain of these gallants had been in London and knew of the recapture. It had been common talk. The king had learned of it. "Joan Heron! — Joan Heron! Let's see — let's see! Grey eyes — gold hair — no, hair like bronze, pale bronze. . . . Would you dare to kiss a witch?" — "No!" — "Yes!" — "No!" — "Yes, I would!" — "To make the Devil jealous — that were a parlous thing!" — "Parlous or not, if she hath grey eyes and red lips —" — "Kiss her — clip her in thy arms and to-night she will come as *succuba* and kiss and clip thee! Then hark to thy roar, 'Avaunt, thou hag! Will none save me from the foul fiend?'" — "Joan Heron! Rememberest the ballad, THE DEVIL AND JOAN HERON?" — "But thou'rt not called 'Daredevil' for naught!" — "Do you dare me?" — "Yes, yes! We dare you!" — "Kiss her hard, clip her fast — No, no. Master Sheriff! Fair play — make a ring! . . . Now! Now!" . . . "*Well, thou hast courage!*" . . . "*She did not struggle, — as do honest women or those who would be thought honest!*" "To-night, to-night, when thou hast put out the light, look to find her!" — "Ha, ha! ha, ha! JOAN HERON —"

They won away from those of the feathered hats. Space widened between the two cavalcades, the voices of the gallants died from the ear. The road lay bright and sunny, the morning air blew fresh and sweet. The great earth swept calm to the horizon, the sky sprang, a pure and cloudless arch. For a long way the road ran lonely of travellers other than the sheriff, his men, and the prisoners. Joan and Aderhold, riding together, talked in low tones. After a time they were passing through a forest. They loved the brown earth and the bracken, the boughs overhead, the purple distances.

"I remember this wood," said Aderhold. "I lay and rested under these trees and wondered what was before me. . . . And I could not see *thee*. — I did not know the lovely thing that was before me."

"And that night, at home, I slept and dreamed — and saw not thee."

"There are glories in our lives. With every pain and sorrow counted in, we have not been unhappy."

"No. Pain did not win. And the light was brighter yesterday than the day before, and brighter to-day than yesterday. . . . Look at the bird flying up!"

The third night the troop did not arrive, in time for rest, at any town or village. A heavy rain had fallen and delayed progress. They came at dark to three or four mean houses, clustered around one of better proportions, an inn by the sign just made out through the dusk and the autumn mists. There

was not much to eat, but it might be made to do — straw could be shaken down — there was a great fireplace where blazing warmth might be had. . . . To Joan and Aderhold, accustomed to the sun, good was this warmth! There was one great stone-flagged room, large as a baron's hall. When the dozen men of their guard disposed themselves, there was yet space where the ruddy glow might reach them, dry their clothing wet with the rain, warm their bodies. Where there was not overmuch for any, their portion of supper was small, indeed, but it sufficed. When all would sleep, lying about the fire upon the straw which the inn's servitors brought in, the two were thrust to a corner at the far end of the place, farthest from the door. A watch was set — a stanch man relieved each two hours by another. The sheriff meant no slipping of the wizard and witch out of his fingers. But sleeping time was not yet come. The two sat to one side, watched, but no more closely than was thought necessary.

Beside the sheriff and his men there were the host and hostess, three or four uncouth servingmen and maids, and one other traveller, belated like the rest. This was a gentle-faced old man, the parson, it was learned, of a parish a dozen miles away. . . . The night before, in a town of fair size, the names of his prisoners becoming known, the sheriff had had trouble to rescue them from the mob that gathered. This day, therefore, he would keep secret the full heinousness of the pair — along the way and here it

was said only that they were a man and woman accused of witchcraft and apostasy, being transferred from one gaol to another.

Under this description the inn folk looked aside at them with great curiosity and fear. At supper time none could be found willing to carry to them from the kitchen their bit of coarse bread and pitcher of water. The host was busied elsewhere; the hostess put down her foot that she would not; the men and maids laughed vacantly and stared, but would not budge in that direction. The old man, the parson, who chanced to be by, uttered a word of gentle chiding, then, as all still hung back, himself picked up the bread and water and carried them to the two. They thanked him. He stood looking at them with a gentle, pained face. Called to supper at the long table where the sheriff and his men were noisily taking places, he went away. But presently, his own frugal meal quickly made, he came back. Theirs, too, was made. They were seated on the stone flooring, shoulder against the wall, hand touching hand. They had no look of wicked folk.

The old man found a stool, brought it and sat down beside them. "You look worn and tired. The roads have been bad to-day."

He spoke to Joan. "Bad here and there," she said. "We are a little tired."

The old man sat looking from one to the other. Then he spoke with simplicity. "Is it true that you are apostates from religion?"

"What," said Aderhold, "is religion? — Is it love of good? Then, with our hand in death's, I dare aver that we are not apostates!" He smiled at the old man. "Since we entered this room you have shown us a piece of religion."

"I would show you truly," said the old man earnestly. "I would show you Jesus."

Aderhold answered gently. "You do so, sir. Believe that all of us know Jesus when we meet him."

The old man looked from one to the other. "You do not seem to me wicked people. I know not how it is, but you seem — " The sheriff and his men rose noisily from table. There immediately ensued a bustle in the place — boards and trestles being taken away — bundles of straw brought in — men going forth to look after the horses — men coming in with the breath of the wet night. One came and called the old parson, drew him away toward the small inner room where he was to rest. Going, he said but one word more to the two. "Good-night. I wish you good sleep."

The host who had called him held up his hands. "Reverend sir, I marvel how you can stand to talk with such miscreants —"

Joan and Aderhold lay upon the stone floor and slept. . . . Night passed, the rain ceased, the clouds broke, dawn came with magnificence. The old parson, approaching, too, in the course of nature, his death hour, slept on like a child in the inner room. But Joan and Aderhold went forward with the

guard. The inn sank from sight, the road stretched before them.

This day, riding into a village, they found there, the centre until their arrival of excited interest, no less a matter than an officer of the law with three or four subordinates, come from the town to which they were bound — despatched thence by the authorities with orders to meet upon the way the party known to be bringing from London that witch and sorcerer, join themselves to it, and so give touch of that town and county's importance, assuming charge, as it were, even leagues away, of their own sinful ones. . . . Aderhold and Joan recognized the head figure — across the years they saw him again at the Hawthorn trials — a tall, lean, saturnine minor piece of the law's machinery who had herded the prisoners in and out of that hall of judgement. He was so tall and lean and lantern-jawed and grim that he might have been a prize man for the rôle of Death in a mystery play. For his part he came and looked at them, threw back his head and laughed. "Ha, ha!" he said. "We've got you back! The wicked do not prosper!" With that he returned to the sheriff with whom he would ride. . . . This village was of the places where stones and other matters were flung, together with whatever epithet came to the lips. Joan and Aderhold opposed a quietness. Both were bleeding when at last the law persuaded or threatened down the raised hands and bore them away for its own blows. Out even upon the open

road came, borne by the wind, "Witch — Witch — Witch! Vile Witch!"

There was a man with the added party who proved to be of kin to the Hawthorn end of the county. He knew Hawthorn and Hawthorn Forest. Riding near to the two prisoners and discoursing with his fellows, the two heard mention of many a familiar name. He had a body of great bulk and a round, good-humoured face, and a liking for his own speech which he delivered — so as not to disturb his superiors — in a monotone of low pitch. The two heard him talk of the Hawthorn crops and fields and weather, of the times good and bad, of the stock, the sheep and cattle, of the streams and woods, of the people. . . . This day was a high, cool autumn day with a tang in the air. The sun shone, but there was a wind and whirling leaves. Joan and Aderhold knew that now there were not many miles. . . . At dusk they halted within a hamlet where the folk were too few to do more than stare and talk. There was no gaol. The two were thrust into a damp and dark place where firewood was piled. Bread and water were given them, but no straw for sleeping upon. When the heavy door was shut and barred, and those without and the hamlet's self sunk into sleep or silence, all was as black, as cold and still, as the grave is supposed to be.

The two knew that next day they would reach the town and the prison from which, six years and more ago, they had fled away. There they would be

separated. . . . Probably they would die together — would be brought forth together to die — might then each reach the other's hand, might clasp it until nearly the last. But not again in this life would they be together like this, alone together, free, shut from the world. . . . To-night, at first, all things flowed away save the fact that they loved, save human passion and sorrow and clinging. They lay in the space left by the heaped firewood, in the intense dark, and they held each other in their arms, close, close! as if to defy all parting, and there were broken words and sighs and tears. The last night — the last night —

The higher mood returned, though slowly, slowly. With the bending of the night toward dawn, it was here. They lay with clasped hands, and when they spoke they spoke of love. All things else flowed away, or did not flow away, for it was now as though love tinted all, made the vast whole warm and vital. . . . They spoke of their child, and of their island life and home; they spoke of the old chief. They spoke of people they had known and loved — of old Roger Heron, of Master Hardwick — of many, of all people. The draff and dross, the crooked and bent, all came into the glow, the solvent. Love — love — love! . . . Love took this form and took that form, and now it flew with these wings, and now with other wings — and it was love of the body and the earth and all nature, and it was love of wisdom — love of knowledge — love of the search — love of love —

love of truth! It was love that was not afraid — that rose on splendid wings — that outwatched the night and saw the morning coming. . . .

Outside began, faintly, a stirring. A cock crew and was answered. A dog barked — the cock-crow came again. A grey light stole in at the keyhole and under the door of the windowless place they were in. It strengthened until they could make out each other's face and form. The dog barked again, men's voices were heard.

Joan and Aderhold rose to their knees, to their feet, steadying each other, holding by the firewood. The place, through the night, had had the chill of the sepulchre. They knew it to be their last moment together; hereafter, to the end, there would be others by. They stood locked in each other's arms, their lips meeting. . . . Steps were heard without and the fall of the chain from across the door. They released each other, they stood apart. The door swung open, light rushed in. "Come forth, you wicked ones! Time to ride on — and to-night we'll lodge you in the nest you flew from!"

There could not have been a fairer autumn day. And now as they rode the country grew more and more familiar. . . . While the day was yet young, all were halted for a few minutes before a tavern set among trees, its sign a great rose painted on a black ground. While ale in jacks and tankards was brought forth for the guardians of the law, the two prisoners had brief speech together.

"The Rose Tavern," said Aderhold. "It was in this place that I first met Master Hardwick. It was here that came the turn toward Hawthorn."

"We have not far to go now."

"No, not far."

In the doorway stood the tall hostess that Aderhold remembered. She stood with arms akimbo, regarding the prisoners with a mien so hostile as to approach the ferocious. "Aaah!" she said. "I'd like to help bring straw and wood!" She spat toward the two. "Have n't *I* had things bewitched? — a gold earring taken from under my eyes, and our ricks burned, and ill luck for a year running — and a bat this summer came flapping through the house every eve, and none could beat it down!" She was speaking to the constable's man who knew Hawthorn. "Wherever that vile witch has been this weary time, be sure she's sent her word out over all these parts to do us harm —"

"And that's very possible," said the round-faced man.

"Are n't you going to take them by Hawthorn?"

"Yes," answered the other. "Turn off this side of town — go round by Hawthorn Wood — then through Hawthorn, and so back to town and the prison. It's miles out, but Hawthorn wants it done. There's a murmur of more witches — and it's good warning to see how such folk fare!"

Joan and Aderhold, startled, exchanged glances. They had not thought of that — of coming to their

prison from the Hawthorn end. They would be longer together. Joan's lips parted. "And Hawthorn Forest — Ah, maybe we shall see Heron's cottage—"

The sun and shadow on the road, the waving trees, the white fleets of clouds in a blue, blue sky. . . . They came to the crossroads with the suicide's grave — they came to the rise of earth where stood the gibbet with its swinging chains — they came to a view of the castle wood and the castle and the town beyond. One of the men asked a question of the round-faced man. "Who lives up there?"

"The earl," said the round-faced man. "But he's away now. It used to be that if he was n't there his cousin, Sir Richard, was. But Sir Richard went to France, and they say he married there and has a son. — I used to know Gervaise his man. But Gervaise has gone too."

The sun made of the castle woods golden woods. Joan could see the Black Tower — see where deep among the trees would be the huntsman's house. A great bird rose above the gold-green and sailed away. . . . Here, a mile from the first outlying house, was the narrow and little-used road that, curving aside from the town, led through some miles of country, tilled and untilled, to Hawthorn Forest; then, with a half turn, came at its leisure to Hawthorn, and so touched again the highway. They took this road.

Until they came to a stream, in size between a

brook and a river, the country was to the two as the other familiar country. But this was the stream that murmured past the Oak Grange. They were riding by its shore, they were going toward the Grange — now indeed it grew to be known land. Aderhold knew every winding. . . . The two rode as in a dream. Before them, in the distance, in a golden haze, rose a forest. "Hawthorn Wood" — and Joan's voice made the words dreamy music. The sun was warm now, the sky was blue, the leaves were falling, but without sadness, ready to go, to return once more to the elements, build again. The stream bent and the road with it. There came a long reach of murmuring water, sliding by a pebbly strand. Across it now were fields that once had gone with the Oak Grange. . . . A little farther, and they saw the old house, and before it the fairy oak.

Just at the footbridge across the stream sounded an order to halt. The lean, grim man whom the town had sent spoke in a harsh and rattling voice. "This is where he made gold and practised sorcery. — Thou God-denier! behold thy old lair, how accursed it looks!"

To the two it did not seem accursed. It stood an old, deserted, ruinous house, but the ivy was green upon it, and the sunshine bathed it, and the swallows circled above the roof. The oak tree in front lived, and from its acorns were growing other oaks. . . . Joan and Aderhold looked long and earnestly. The air was thronged with memories and there

seemed a weaving music. They were not unhappy — the artifex within them was not unhappy. But those that were with them thought that they must be so.

The horses were in motion again. And now the road turned and became Hawthorn Forest road that ran to Hawthorn. The Oak Grange passed from sight, the murmur of the stream left the ears. They were within Hawthorn Forest. The great trees rose around; there fell gold shafts of light; there came the odour, damp and rich, of the forest mould deepening, deepening since old time. Down a purple vista they saw deer moving — a faint wind was blowing — there was a drifting, drifting down of leaves. . . . To Joan and Aderhold this forest breathed music. They were glad to be here once again. They knew the single trees and the groups of trees, they knew each picture within a picture: loved the detail and loved the whole. It was sweet, before death, to have been in Hawthorn Wood again.

Heron's cottage. When they were forth from the forest they would see that plainly, riding by. Perhaps they would draw rein there too. The red crept into Joan's cheek, her grey eyes grew bright and wistful. . . . The forest stopped; the grassy road brought them out into full sunshine, a high blue sky arching the open, autumn country. Heron's cottage. . . . There was yet the green path from the road, yet the fruit trees, bronze now and trembling in the wind — but there was no thatched cottage. "Vile

witch!" said the tall man, "Hawthorn burned your house."

Hawthorn — there was no great distance now to Hawthorn. There had never been much passing on this road, little human life going up and down. This day there seemed none; moreover, a cot or two by the wayside showed no folk about the doors, appeared shut and left to care for themselves. At dawn a man had been sent forward on a fresh horse — the loneliness of the road now connected itself with that. "Everybody's gone to Hawthorn," said the round-faced man.

Hawthorn Church, stone amid stone-like yew trees, Hawthorn roofs showed over the rim of the fields. Out of a coppice rose a lark and soaring high sang up there in the blue. The Hawthorn Forest road joined the highroad; guard and prisoners coming upon this turned now to Hawthorn village. Carthew House — they passed Carthew House — they passed the outlying cottages, among them that of Alison Inch — they came into Hawthorn and to Hawthorn Church and Master Clement's house. Here were the people. . . .

A bench had been placed by the churchyard gate, and upon this stood Master Clement, raised as by a pulpit over Hawthorn. Near him stood Squire Carthew and his brother, and the latter stood grim and grey as granite. It was his intention to rise in church the coming Sunday and before all Hawthorn acknowledge that six-years-past sin. He owed that

to God. The confession might or might not put in jeopardy his future in England, but, however that might be, he would make it — make it publicly! So he might have peace and could go on with the great work, assured that God had forgiven. . . . For to-day he had made himself come hither, taking it as part of his duty. Master Clement had urged that it was his duty. With a stern face he gazed upon the two, but they, after one glance, looked at him no more.

All around, packed in the churchyard and the street, were the people of Hawthorn and its neighbourhood. How many familiar faces they saw — but how few out of which superstition had not razed kindliness! Heretofore on this journey, where they had been set in the eye of a gathered crowd, the two had met with physical blows no less than with hard words. But the Hawthorn throng was held in hand. No stone or clod or refuse was thrown. The hard words arose, broke over them heavily, a sordid and bitter wave. But this, too, the minister checked. He raised his arms and flung them wide, he shook his lean and nervous hands. Thrust to the front of the throng stood the tinker with whom Joan had once walked on the road from the town. "Hist, hist!" said the tinker. "Now will they hear their last sermon!"

"'*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged according to their works.* . . .

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire!'

"'And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.'"

Hawthorn drew in its breath and shivered with that sermon. They said that it was the greatest that Master Clement had ever preached, and he had preached a-many great ones! Some of the simpler folk almost looked for fire to come down from heaven and consume the wicked leech and that vilest witch where they stood. It would have been a wonderful sight and lesson! But doubtless God wanted the forms of the law carried out — though they could not but still think how wonderful would have been a visible sign. . . .

Joan and Aderhold were an hour in Hawthorn. . . . It passed; all hours passed, though some, and this among them, went on wounded feet.

It passed. They were in motion again. The Hawthorn folk that cried bitter words behind them, the narrow street, the small, familiar houses with dooryards where the flowers were fading, the alehouse, the green, the sexton's house, other houses, the elms and willows that marked the village end — all were overpassed, left behind. Here at last was the open road, and they had six miles to ride together. . . . Hawthorn faded from the mind.

It was afternoon. The gold light lay softly over

the country that had always seemed to them a very fair country — that seemed so still. The wind had fallen. They rode side by side. Those that guarded them were tired with the long day and its various excitements. These rode in silence or talked among themselves in voices somewhat subdued, and for a time let the prisoners go unmarked. When they came within sight of the town it would be different. Then all would straighten in their saddles and closely surround the two, assuming the proper air of vigilance. But now they allowed them to ride side by side and gave no heed to what words they might speak to each other.

They were simple words that Joan and Aderhold spoke — old, old words of love and tenderness. They spoke of courage. And they spoke of Truth, the Origin and Goal. And they loved each other, and the light of all suns, and they found song and sweetness, promise and fulfilment even in this autumnal day. . . .

The miles fell away like the leaves from the trees. The ground rose; they had a great view bathed in the amber light. There flowed a gleaming crescent. "The river!" said Joan.

The town that they had seen from the south, now they saw from the north. They saw the river and the arched bridge, the climbing streets and many roofs; they saw the great church and near it the dark prison, and above the town the castle and the castle wood. The sun was sinking, the light was reddening;

above, the sky sprang pure, without a stain, for the fleets of clouds had sailed away.

The tall, lean man spoke. "Witch and blasphemer! do you see yon ragged field sloping down? That is where we will hang you."

Joan and Aderhold, going toward the river, looked upon the ragged field with steadfastness, but gave but few moments to that sight. Before them was the arched bridge, and they saw, even on this side of it, people gathering. Presently the sheriff's men would come between them, surrounding each, making one go before the other. Now they had these last few moments side by side. Their hands might touch, their eyes be eloquent. Farewell — and farewell — and oh, fare you well, love — my love! . . .

The road descended to the river and the bridge. There arose the sound they knew from the crowd they knew. The sheriff's men pushed between them; they must go one before the other. So each might be better seen as well as better guarded. They crossed the river; they mounted the steep street; they came to the town square, past the great church's sculptured portal. . . . The two had been ordered to dismount, were now afoot. . . . Here was the pillory — here was the black prison's frowning front, the prison steps, the open door. . . . The setting sun flooded the place with red light. A flint, flung by some strong arm, had cut Aderhold's forehead. With his hand he wiped the blood away and looked to see Joan. She was upon the prison steps, lifted so

that the roaring crowd might see her. That great light from the sun beat strongly upon face and form. The form was drawn to its height, the face was high, resolved, and beautiful. But the crowd shouted, "The witch! The witch! Look at the light as of fire! The fire has her already! Witch — Witch — Witch!"

Joan mounted the last step, the black prison gaped for her, she entered. Aderhold, mounting, met also that great shaft of light. The voice of the crowd swelled, grew phrensied, but he heeded it not, and with a face lit from within followed Joan into the prison.

THE END

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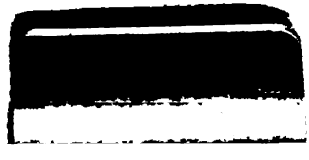
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